Our monthly Ho‘oha‘aheo newsletter will temporarily transition to a COVID-focused weekly edition as we strive to provide updates and helpful resources. As students are kept at the forefront of all that we do, we want to ensure employees and school communities are informed. Please keep an eye out for this weekly digital update.

Updates from Interim Superintendent Hayashi

Aloha, HIDOE community!

I’m excited to launch this weekly newsletter to establish more frequent communication with our families, staff and other community stakeholders. This will serve as a tool to inform you of public school updates and highlights.

» This week, the state Department of Health revised its guidance around isolation and quarantine requirements for K-12 schools to align with recent updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

» Under the guidance, isolation and quarantine times for students and staff who meet certain conditions have been reduced to five days from 10. We have updated our Return to School/Work Criteria accordingly.

» This change supports our efforts to continue to prioritize in-person learning while upholding safety protocols in our schools. The revisions also recognize the protection that vaccinations provide for our staff and students, and the added protection boosters provide for eligible staff. With the exception of our youngest learners under age 5, everyone on our campuses is eligible to be vaccinated, and currently more than 90% of our employees are vaccinated.

» The hard work and dedication of our teachers, administrators, staff, parents and students are greatly appreciated. Their efforts along with our partnership with the state Department of Health give us the confidence to keep schools safely open during this pandemic.

» Health experts have credited our layered mitigation strategies for the positivity rates in our schools being far lower than those in the broader community. Let’s continue to be vigilant in our efforts. Mahalo!

HIDOE Case Counts

A total of 2,551 confirmed or probable cases were reported across Hawai’i’s 257 public schools from Jan. 3-7 for a daily average of 510.2 cases (as of Jan. 12). For the latest case count information, visit bit.ly/HIDOECOVID-
Question of the Week

**Q:** Is there a threshold for closing a classroom or school due to COVID? What is this process like and what can families expect?

**A:** The Department’s priority is to keep all classrooms and schools safe and open for in-person learning. Similar to how the surge of the Delta variant was addressed, there is no generalized threshold for closing a classroom or school and each situation will be individually addressed. No school community is the same; schools are empowered with the flexibility to independently address challenges that arise.

There are many different variables that go into major decisions like closing a classroom or school. School leaders work with their complex area superintendents to assess and weigh all possible solutions. If a situation arises where a class or school is not able to open, parents will be notified by their school as soon as possible. Schools are monitoring their situation daily and we ask families for their flexibility and understanding as we navigate this challenging time.

ICYMI

» [@HSTEorg](https://www.hste.org) wants to remind teachers that we believe in them! They have been amazing educators despite these trying times and we appreciate them so much for it. Thank you, teachers!

» Get your vaccination questions answered! Dr. Sarah Kemble, state epidemiologist, and Dr. Natascha Ching, pediatric infectious disease specialist, answer [Parent FAQs: COVID Vaccine for 5-11 Year Olds](https://www.hawaii.gov/pandemic).

» Manana Elementary and Ilima Intermediate are just two of the many schools hosting @hawaiipacifichealth’s Vax Squad vaccination.

View the Department’s COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidance for School Year 2021-22.
events throughout the month of January.

PPE in Schools

Schools and offices are provided with essential PPE and cleaning and sanitation supplies based on needs. Essential PPE items include disposable surgical face masks, KN95 face masks, face shields, gloves, hand sanitizer and disinfectant. Needs are based on CDC guidance and the risk of exposure levels. To monitor the PPE supply levels at your school, click here.

Stay Informed

The Department will be presenting its supplemental budget request for next fiscal year before key legislative committees tomorrow, Jan. 13. Tune in on YouTube via the links below:

» 9 a.m. House Committee on Finance
» 2:30 p.m. Senate Committee on Ways and Means and Committee on Education