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!

Welcome to another edition of our COVID Weekly Updates.

Easing of COVID Restrictions

» At a news conference Tuesday Gov. David Ige announced upcoming changes to the state’s COVID-19 vaccination requirement for public workers and visitors, but maintained there are no immediate plans to end the state’s indoor mask mandate.

» The governor said the requirement that state and county employees show proof of vaccination or weekly negative test results will end when the current Emergency Proclamation sunsets on March 25. Visitors also will no longer need to provide proof of vaccination status or a negative test result to enter state facilities. The HIDOE is taking steps to align with the planned updates and will communicate changes to the field. The requirements remain in place until March 25.

» While the governor said there are no immediate plans to end the statewide indoor mask requirement, he said health officials continue to review data and updates from the CDC. ÔWe continue to monitor the COVID-19 cases as well as the hospital status and will be moving forward based on that information,Ô Gov. Ige said during the news conference.

» The Department continues to require masking both indoors and outdoors on school campuses at this time as an added layer of protection. We are working closely with the state Department of Health to ensure our COVID protocols are appropriate.

HIDOE Case Counts

A total of 158 confirmed or probable cases were reported across Hawai‘i’s 257 public schools from Feb. 22-25 for a daily average of 40 cases, excluding the Presidents’ Day holiday (as of Feb. 28). For the latest case count information, visit bit.ly/HIDOECOVID-19Updates.
Questions of the Week

Q: I saw that the Department announced guidelines for 2022 in-person commencement ceremonies. What if COVID conditions change for the better or worse between now and May?

A: In addition to the graduation guidance, all ceremonies must adhere to the Department’s overall health and safety protocols and county social gathering regulations that are in place at the time of the ceremony. The Department’s guidance was designed with and reviewed by the state Department of Health Disease Outbreak Division and the Office of the Attorney General. It is subject to change as we continue to monitor the situation. If state or county restrictions loosen, the Department can look at revising the guidance.

Q: How do the recent changes in county COVID mandates impact the Department’s health and safety guidance for schools?

A: Despite the county changes, Gov. Ige’s statewide COVID-19 emergency proclamation, which includes mandates on public indoor masking, the Safe Travels Hawai‘i program, and state and county employee COVID-19 vaccination requirements, remains in effect through March 25. While Gov. Ige recently announced the ending of the Safe Travels Hawai‘i program and the state and county employee COVID-19 vaccination requirements as the emergency proclamation expires on March 25, no decision has been made yet in regards to the indoor masking mandate.

The HIDOE will continue to follow the lead of national and state public health authorities regarding COVID-19 protocols in schools.
ICYMI

» After taking a pause due to COVID, the Milken Foundation resumed presenting the Milken Educator Award, otherwise known as "the Oscars of Teaching." On Monday Kalihi Kai Elementary academic coach Michelle Le Iwasaki was recognized with an unrestricted $25,000 monetary prize. Congratulations, Ms. Iwasaki!

» The Wallace Foundation highlights the crucial role that principals have played in navigating school and community responses to COVID-19. Nānākuli Elementary School Principal Lisa Higa contributes to this discussion in the Wallace Foundation’s latest blog post.

» Farrington High School Performing Arts Center held the opening night of its first in-person show since the beginning of the pandemic on Friday, February 25. Check out coverage of the live performance, "Mamma Mia," courtesy of KITV4 Island Television, or purchase tickets here.