Our monthly Ho’o‘ha‘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, and welcome to another weekly newsletter.

Making Outdoor Masking Voluntary
» This week we announced that effective today wearing masks outdoors is optional for students, faculty and staff at all HIDOE schools and facilities. Indoor masking is still required until further notice.
» The Department has been working closely with the Hawai‘i State Department of Health (DOH) to evaluate how the updated masking recommendations announced last month by the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) can be safely implemented in our schools and offices.
» Please be assured that the health and safety of our students is a priority and unmasking outdoors is voluntary. We are not letting our guards down but we do understand that, while masks work, our community is far better protected against the virus than it was two years ago at the start of the pandemic.
» To view the Department’s announcement, click here.

Reminders for Spring Break
» Next week is spring break and we wish everyone the rest that they well deserve.
» As a reminder, if you are traveling, please refer to the Department’s Health and Safety Guidance upon the start of the fourth quarter.
» On March 1 Gov. David Ige announced that the state’s Safe Travels guidance will sunset late this month. Those changes, however, will not take effect until March 25 — after we return from spring break. Our existing guidance remains in place until further notice.

Transitioning our Weekly Newsletter
» As COVID conditions improve in Hawai‘i and case counts in our schools decline significantly, the content of our weekly newsletter will be adapting to the broader needs of our communities. We will transition our Weekly COVID Newsletter to communicate a wider range of HIDOE updates after this edition.
» We launched this weekly communication in mid-January and have worked hard to provide relevant updates and information for stakeholders in the nine issues since. We are committed to providing regular updates and will continue a weekly issue for the near future.
HIDOE Case Counts

A total of 101 confirmed or probable cases were reported across Hawai‘i’s 257 public schools from Feb. 28-March 4 for a daily average of 20 cases (as of March 7). For the latest case count information, visit bit.ly/HIDOECOVID-19Updates.

February 28-March 4

Question of the Week

Q: Gov. Ige announced on Tuesday that the state's indoor mask mandate will expire after March 25. Does this apply to schools as well?

A: Because school settings have different risk considerations than public settings, HIDOE’s indoor masking policy currently remains in place, apart from the state's overall indoor mask mandate. The state Department of Health (DOH) still recommends indoor masking in schools for the time being, and indoor masking continues to be a requirement at all HIDOE schools and offices until further notice. Staff, please stay tuned to your @k12.hi.us email for any updates. We will announce any changes to HIDOE’s health and safety guidance based on the latest data and information from national and local health authorities on our website.

ICYMI

» Two proposals moving through the Legislature — HB1834 and SB2816 — call for a pilot program that would compensate selected families with relief funds of up to $1,000 to help offset pandemic-related learning expenses. To track the bills’ progress, click here.

» EdWeek published a Q&A session, ‘Let’s Trust Our Teachers: National Award Finalists on Why Public Support Is Crucial’, where Hawai‘i State Teacher of the Year Whitney Aragaki of Waiākea High School, alongside the three other finalists competing for the National Teacher of the Year title, speak to hot topics.
Children may be more vulnerable to the harmful effect of stress than adults, and most often, they aren’t able to recognize or verbalize it. Learn more about helping children cope with emergencies from the CDC.