HAWAII’S public elementary schools have made significant headway in reducing the number of students chronically absent, a strong predictor of academic success.

“The significant reductions in chronic absenteeism show schools are doing a better job at making instruction more engaging and interesting,” said Deputy Supt. Ronn Nozoe. “They are to be commended for working with families and community partners to provide wrap-around services to address attendance barriers like health and transportation issues, intervening with at-risk students based on data, and improving school culture.”

Key findings from 2013-14:

• The percent of students who are chronically absent (15 days or more) has dropped seven points to 11 percent.

• Students proficient in science climbed six points to 40 percent. Slight declines were seen in reading (three-point drop to 69 percent) and math proficiency (one-point drop to 59 percent) as schools adjust to new standards and an expected new baseline for scores.

• Graduation and college-going rates are steady.


**HURRICANE ISELLE**

**Leadership in the face of the storm**

Hawaii’s public schools are considered the hearts of their communities. This is especially true during times of crises and emergencies. On Aug. 6, principals at schools designated as emergency shelters sprang into action when it became apparent Hurricane Iselle was on track to hit the state.

It’s a frenzied 24 to 48 hours before shelters open, with school administrators communicating with county civil defense and the American Red Cross, conferring with their teams on campus, mobilizing volunteers — while still taking care of business at school.

On Hawaii Island, Kea’au High assisted more than 300 evacuees along with 25 animals in the designated pet area. Principal Dean Cevallos noted it was an extraordinarily busy time as they housed people for three days and still opened for the Primary Election.

Waiakea High staff displayed extraordinary selflessness in leaving their own homes to house and protect nearly 400 people in the Warriors’ classrooms and gym. “Working with a few Red Cross volunteers and a group of Department of Health public health nurses, Waiakea High’s shelter team manned areas throughout the campus ensuring the safety and welfare of the general public,” said Principal Kei Koga. “We are proud Warriors at WHS.” Hilo High also sheltered more than 170 people and some pets.

On Maui, Baldwin High took in about 115 people. “Providing shelter is not just a duty but the right thing to do,” said Principal Catherine Kilborn. “I am grateful for the Red Cross personnel, who deserve the credit for providing personal care for the community.”

“It was a total team effort,” said Principal Justin Mew of Kaiser High on Oahu, which took in about 70 people. “We had help from my fellow complex area principals, our PCN.C — and our teachers were simply outstanding.”

**SUPT’S CORNER**

Important takeaways of the results, by Supt. Kathryn Matayoshi. BACK PAGE

**ONLINE**

bit.ly/StriveHi1314


**TEACHERS**

Teach to Lead is an online community of educators to share and collaborate on promising ideas to advance teacher leadership and address pressing problems in education. Members are invited to submit short ideas — under 300 words — that advance teacher leadership in their area and promote them on social media, helping to spur the conversation. Visit teachtolead.ideascle.com.

**SCHOOLS**

Registration for the 2015 Spelling Bee is open at www.spellingbee.com. The cost for school registration is $130. Registration deadline is Oct. 15. Schools hold their bees by Nov. 30, District Bees are held in January, and the district winner and runner up compete at the Hawaii State Spelling Bee on March 20. Our champion competes in the National Bee in May 2015. Good luck, spellers! (Pictured: 2014 Hawaii champion Christianne Abella, Konawaena Middle.)
Sup t.'s Corner

Our Strive HI Performance System results were released to the public on Aug. 25 — school and district leaders had access a few weeks prior to analyze the data.

Our elementary schools have made huge gains in their fight to slash chronic absenteeism — 163 of 169 schools improved, and our statewide rate plunged seven points to 11 percent. Teachers, school leaders and support staff have improved the chances of success for 5,500 students by doing this.

When this data first became available to us, we celebrated.

Making chronic absenteeism a component of our performance system inspired schools to accelerate their outreach, launch awareness campaigns and instill the value of school with students and families. Their work has paid off.

We did see a small drop in reading and math proficiency as we transition to new standards and the aligned assessments. The one-point drop in math (to 59 percent) and three-point drop in reading (to 69 percent) was not unexpected. A new baseline of scores will be set this year that will give us comparable data going forward. We can cheer the six-point increase in science proficiency (to 40 percent).

Our career and college readiness indicators are steady: 82 percent graduated high school, 63 percent enrolled in college. We are eager to see these rise. If we keep succeeding in cutting chronic absenteeism, that will herald better results.

It’s worth remembering why we do this. Strive HI is a system we collaboratively developed in Hawaii as a waiver to the federal No Child Left Behind law, which sanctioned schools that failed to meet escalated reading and math proficiency targets. While those test scores are important, we all know those aren’t the sole measures of a school’s success, or a student’s success. Strive HI measures proficiency (including science), growth, readiness and achievement gap. Taken together, we can strategically support schools and students where they need it most.

Our 2013-14 results are available online: bit.ly/StriveHI1314

SEPT 12

TOP STAFF HONORED

The DOE’s Employee, Manager and Team of the Year will be recognized at the Hawaii State Capitol Auditorium for the Department’s annual Incentive & Service Awards Program. The program honors employees for special and continued contributions to improve the school services. Their dedication inspires all of us who are working to make Hawaii’s public schools better for all students. Staff and public are welcome! Program starts at 3 p.m.

SEPT 19

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

Staff and the public can review test questions aligned to the Hawaii Common Core standards and help recommend achievement levels for grade-level proficiency. To register, please visit SmarterBalanced.org /OnlinePanel.

SEPT 23

YOUTH PHILANTHROPY GRANT

Youth Service Hawaii has grant funds (up to $750) available to support service learning projects proposed by school students with teacher (grades 4-12) that address community needs such as homelessness, the environment, disaster preparedness and more. Students must be directly involved in service and will share their experience with educators in Spring 2015. Details and application (due 9/23) online: bit.ly/1pNYPlr

SEPT 30

REGISTER FOR SOTF!

The 6th Annual Schools of the Future Conference convenes at the Hawaii Convention Center Nov. 6 & 7. More than 80 best practice presentations are available during this collaborative learning event to catapult schools to the next level of education. Walk-in and late registration pricing begin after Sept. 30.

Which sentence should be added to the paragraph to state the author’s main claim?

A. Watching television makes a person healthy.
B. Watching television can be a sign of intelligence.
C. Television can be a positive influence on people.
D. Television has more varied programs than ever before.

Answer: C