



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

January 26, 2022

TO: Complex Area Superintendents
Principals (All)

FROM: Keith T. Hayashi
Interim Superintendent

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Keith T. Hayashi", is written over the printed name and title.

SUBJECT: **Guidance on Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Schools**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) understands that schools are being challenged by the constantly changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic. As health guidance for schools from the state Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is updated, Department protocols are also updated. The Department has been steadfast in our decision to maintain in-person learning and our schools and complex areas have done a tremendous job carrying this heavy lift. However, I do know that this has its limits.

Principals and their school teams should carefully consider the following to determine the feasibility of maintaining in-person learning on their campus:

1. **Staffing:** Is there enough staff to safely maintain school operations?
2. **Supervision:** Are there enough adults to supervise students at all times of the day to ensure safety?
3. **Operations:** Is the school fully equipped with the resources (e.g., meal preparation and service) to safely maintain school operations?

The decision to transition a classroom to distance learning lies with the school Principal and the Complex Area Superintendent; and should take place after other options have been explored. Should there be a need to transition the entire campus to distance learning, the Complex Area Superintendent must consult with the Superintendent.

- **Transition to distance learning for one (1) school day:** Principal and Complex Area Superintendent, in consultation with the Superintendent, should discuss and determine that all other options have been exhausted. The Complex Area Superintendent will notify the Superintendent of the decision to transition to distance learning for one day.

- **Transition to distance learning for more than one (1) school day:** Principal, Complex Area Superintendent, and the Superintendent should discuss and determine that all other options have been exhausted. If distance learning continues beyond one school day, notification to school staff, students, families, and service providers, with a planned date for the return to in-person learning, shall be provided for planning purposes. Determining the length of the transition will be based upon such conditions as when quarantine and isolation periods end for impacted staff and anticipated restoration of impacted services.

Principals will implement their contingency plans and ensure resources are provided to students, families, and staff to enable virtual teaching and learning. State offices will stand ready to assist complex areas and schools in such areas as student transportation services, school food services, information technology services, curriculum and instructional design, extracurricular and out-of-school-time programs, and communication.

This guidance is meant to preserve the flexibility of the schools and complex areas to address the impact of the current pandemic within their school and community. Community and school contextual information, such as demographics and specific school and community needs, must be taken into account when making such decisions that will impact the entire school community.

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment in prioritizing in-person learning while responding to the evolving conditions and challenges presented by the pandemic.

KTH:sk

c: Deputy Superintendent
Assistant Superintendents