



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF AGENDA ITEM III, ACTION ITEM A, Board Action on revisions to the Department of Education's 2020-2021 school calendar: additional training and professional development days for teachers and staff at the beginning of the school year and delaying Students' First Day to ensure health and safety preparedness for schools

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF AGENDA ITEM III, ACTION ITEM B, Board Action on general waiver to allow reduction of the 180 day school year and 1,080 student instructional hours pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes Section 302A-251, consistent with revisions to the Department of Education's 2020-2021 school calendar

SUBMITTING COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEM III, ACTION ITEM C, Board Action on Board expectations regarding: (1) focusing additional training and professional development days included in the revisions to the Department of Education's 2020-2021 school calendar on health, safety, and distance learning; (2) starting student instruction for the 2020-2021 school year in distance learning mode; (3) mandating masks on public school campuses; and (4) detailed, written, publicly posted guidance from the Department of Health

THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2020

1 P.M.

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT, HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

RANDY PERREIRA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

LIZ HO, ADMINISTRATOR, UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

Chair Payne, and Members of the Board:

The Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA), United Public Workers (UPW), and the Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA) are committed to ensuring our schools reopen in a manner that ensures the educational needs of our students as well as the health and safety of our students, their families, school employees, and the community at large.

While we are committed to continue persistently working through the many critical questions yet unanswered, we respectfully provide the following comments regarding the Hawaii State Board of Education (BOE) action items for its meeting on July 30, 2020.

While the following list is not exhaustive, it represents significant areas which we collectively believe must be addressed by the BOE, Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE), Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH), and the state of Hawaii.

**A. Board Action on revisions to the Department of Education's 2020-2021 school calendar: additional training and professional development days for teachers and staff at the beginning of the school year and delaying Students' First Day to ensure health and safety preparedness for schools**

We support postponing the start of the student school year to Monday, Aug. 17, with full instructional days beginning on that date. This is a delay of nine (9) instructional days. These days are necessary to ensure that all employees receive proper training, are issued necessary personal protective equipment, and have adequate time to prepare for our students' return to campus. The HSTA is committed to meet for further negotiations necessary to modify the HSTA SY 2020-21 COVID-19 Response Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as it relates to the school year calendar.

**B. Board Action on general waiver to allow reduction of the 180-day school year and 1,080 student instructional hours pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes Section 302A-251, consistent with revisions to the Department of Education's 2020-2021 school calendar**

The HGEA, UPW, and HSTA support the BOE waiving nine (9) instructional days from the 180-day school year as well as the 1,080 student instructional hours for school year 2020-21. The HGEA, UPW, and HSTA recognize the HIDOE is already operating within serious fiscal restraints and adding any makeup instructional days will be cost prohibitive. Therefore, we have committed to future negotiations to discuss ways to recover some of the instructional days lost.

**C. Board Action on Board expectations regarding:**

**(1) focusing additional training and professional development days included in the revisions to the Department of Education's 2020-2021 school calendar on health, safety, and distance learning;**

All staff in our public schools need training, personal protective equipment, and the instructional staff, including but not limited to, teachers, special services personnel, and educational assistants (EAs), need additional professional development related to curriculum delivery and support.

The state and complex area levels are responsible for providing support to school level leaders and should therefore provide the trainers, funding and resources necessary for the additional training and professional development. Timely, accurate, and up-to-date training on health and safety should be provided by health professionals whenever possible. Training should be offered statewide for the sake of consistency, clarity and equity.

Staff training and preparation for all HIDOE staff includes the following:

- Reviewing and understanding written guidance related to safe operations of schools during COVID-19;
- Training and practice on various new building and campus protocols such as check-in, health screenings, face coverings, opening/closing, recess and lunch programs;
- Training and practice on access to and proper use of personal protective equipment;
- Training and practice on cleaning and disinfection protocols;
- Training and practice on contingency plans for shutting down of campus facilities due to COVID-19;
- Walkthrough of campus distancing, health and safety protocols;
- Specialized configuration of classrooms, offices, cafeterias, libraries and other meeting spaces to meet distancing, signage, and other health and safety protocols;
- Planning and training time with and between instructional staff such as teachers, special services personnel, educational assistants, part-time teachers and others.

Certificated employees such as teachers in particular also need time to engage in professional development and planning for the following:

- Professional development regarding their school's blended learning programs
- Professional development on virtual learning instructional delivery, platforms and programs;
- Professional development to address student's social emotional needs;
- Professional development and in-service on contingency plans to continue instruction when buildings close due to COVID-19;
- Training and in-service for those dealing with special needs populations related to compensatory educational services;
- Training on any changes to school policies and procedures, including but not limited to, student discipline, referrals, etc.
- Planning time to work within department and/or grade levels;
- Planning time to prepare for student assessments in learning loss;
- Planning time to modify curriculum for blended learning;
- Planning time to modify curriculum to address physical distancing restrictions.

**(2) starting student instruction for the 2020-2021 school year in distance learning mode;**

While we strongly believe in-person, face-to-face instruction is the most effective method. Schools have modified their instructional delivery models for 2020-2021 to meet the demands of COVID-19 and the necessary physical distancing needed in building spaces. However, it is very likely that school buildings and/or entire campuses will have to be closed down by the Department of Health due to COVID-19 at some point. Therefore, the HIDOE and DOH must provide comprehensive state-level written guidance regarding the potential shutdown of classrooms, buildings campuses, and/or entire complex areas and how the continuation of educational services via a full distance learning mode will occur. Those comprehensive plans need to also account for the temporary reassignment, if necessary, of other HIDOE employees. Each school in turn needs to have their own contingency plan for full or partial school shutdowns and should make them available to HGEA, UPW and HSTA.

We believe that all employees should be adequately prepared for such a change with training and students and families should be communicated with in advance about said contingency plan. Any decision regarding starting student instruction via a fully distance learning mode must be done with the above in mind.

Per the BOE resolution and the HSTA MOU, the HDOE should provide “clear guidance to families that allow parents or guardians who do not feel comfortable sending their children to a school campus to keep their children at home.” The HDOE has failed to provide adequate guidance to both administrators and parents/guardians regarding 100% distant learning options, including how schools will address 504, SpEd, SpEd PreK, EL and other needs of students, if parents select this option. This failure has further complicated and exacerbated schools’ efforts to plan for in-person physical distancing and instruction.

**(3) mandating masks on public school campuses;**

We strongly support mandatory face coverings and cloth masks be worn by all individuals on school campuses and related facilities. There should also be a standard system wide policy for any exception(s) to this policy, including but not limited to a medical note for anyone claiming they cannot wear a mask due to medical reasons.

**and (4) detailed, written, publicly posted guidance from the Department of Health**

The MOU with HSTA requires that the DOH provide written guidance before “in-person schooling will resume” (pg. 2, line 34 HSTA MOU). In addition, lines 47-48 of the agreement states that the HDOE will “consult and take direction from the DOH for health and safety measures.”

The guidance from the DOH should include but not be limited to the following:

- Minimum procedures for health check screening of employees, students and campus visitors;
- Procedures to address employees, students or campus visitors who become sick on a campus or show signs of illness;
- Health room and isolation room procedures;
- How schools will handle incoming new students, especially new military students who are not subject to the 14-day quarantine order;
- Proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for various personnel;
- Procedures to support any contact tracing that will need to occur related to COVID-19;
- Proper physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting protocols in line with CDC guidelines.

In addition to the above issues, there are a few issues specific to personnel that must be addressed.

Contingency plans and instructions are needed for when administrators, teachers, educational assistants, custodians, and other school employees are ill and/or must self-isolate due to possible exposure to COVID-19. Employees will have no unnecessary direct contact or interaction with students or parents on campus. Contingency plans must also be in place if significant portions of the staff choose to retire, resign, take leave and or utilize their FFCRA leave benefits.

The CDC guidance indicates that schools should have a “back-up staffing plan.” Currently the HDOE has no plan or guidance for administrators on what to do if there are inadequate staff and teachers to start the school year. There is also no plan to assess substitute availability and/or how substitutes will utilize and access the technology and equipment teachers will use for the blended and distance learning.

The HGEA, UPW, and HSTA remain committed to taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure the safety of our members and the students they serve. The employer must provide a clean and sanitary workplace. We ask the BOE to ensure that the above issues are addressed before students return to classrooms.

Handwritten signatures of Corey Rosenlee, Randy Perreira, and Liz Ho.

**Corey Rosenlee**  
President  
HSTA

**Randy Perreira**  
Executive Director  
HGEA

**Liz Ho**  
Administrator  
UPW