



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

January 3, 2022

Aloha Students,

I hope you and your family enjoyed a wonderful and safe holiday season!

Like many of you, our concerns grew with the uptick in COVID positive cases in our state. We worked closely with the State Department of Health over the holiday break to monitor the potential impacts of the increase in community cases and the highly transmissible Omicron variant. We continue to prioritize keeping schools open at this time and are looking forward to welcoming students back to resume in-person learning this week with consistent safety measures in place.

Before the winter break, our public school system minimized transmission and kept students safe through our layered mitigation strategies. This included promoting vaccinations and boosters, masking, staying home when sick, and hand washing. From December 1 to December 20 (the first day of winter break), the Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) schools collectively saw a daily average of 25 positive cases across nearly 42,000 staff and 160,000 students, according to our case count dashboard. Hawaii reported its first Omicron case on December 2nd.

We anticipate a rise in case counts because schools are a reflection of their communities; however, data shows the safety measures practiced in schools are effective. We are also fortunate to now have additional resources, including vaccinations for students 5 years and older — meaning nearly everyone on our campuses is eligible to be vaccinated. Booster shots and opportunities for testing within the community or at school are also available.

Getting vaccinated and getting booster shots are some of the best ways to protect yourself and those around you. We highly encouraged all those eligible to get their vaccination. Visit hawaiiicovid19.com/vaccine for information on vaccination sites. In preparation of the return from winter break, we encourage you to revisit the HIDOE's COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidance at bit.ly/HIDOEsaftyguidance. Updates to align with the Department of Health's latest guidance on quarantine requirements are forthcoming.

Keeping our schools open and safe is a community effort and will require action and commitment from each and every one of us. Thank you for doing your part and for your continued support and cooperation.

Mahalo,

Keith T. Hayashi
Interim Superintendent