

April 28, 2016

Welcome Message To Governor's ESSA Team

Aloha and greetings.

Let me join the Governor and his staff in expressing deepest appreciation for your willingness to serve and for the sacrifice you have to make. We are all volunteers – serving for a greater purpose and a greater vision. You are here because you are a respected and talented leader, because you are passionate about public education, and because you believe that powerful and lasting change can happen, and powerful and lasting change needs to happen. You are here because you share in a vision for our schools but also because you are unique in that you can think out of the box, be creative, and be innovative.

The challenge that has been handed to our team is daunting. There is a clear sense of urgency.

We will be guided by the Governor's vision of education. We need to know and understand what that vision is and what it means.

About the Every Student Succeeds Act, we will need to possess a clear understanding about the ESSA law. We need to know the purpose and the elements of the law but most importantly, we will need to know the opportunities that the law provides and can be taken advantage of in a new state plan.

We need to have a clear picture of where we are, the current theory of action, the current plan, and the current results.

It is more than developing an ESSA plan that is needed for our schools, it is about a bigger picture, a new approach, a new vision. It is about starting to think about our children's future in a different way from the traditional way we have been doing it – where we have been looking at our own past to do so ... and that is part of our problem.

The challenge is to step away from being right in the midst of an ever changing, demanding, and overwhelming context that is currently public education. We will need to step back and get a balcony view to more deeply look at what are we doing, why are we doing it, how well are we doing. Our work will engage us in a deep needs assessment that identifies the gaps between the vision of where we need to be and the reality of where we are.

The challenge will be about engaging stakeholders in an open and inclusive process to inform everyone about the opportunity facing us and to listen, empathize, and appreciate their insights, input, feedback, and recommendations ... and using all of this to inform the work we will do to shape the future of public education in Hawaii.

The challenge is also about providing for the Governor, the BOE, DOE, and the state not only the “what” but also the “why” and “how” to move forward.

We are tasked with developing a “blue print” for public education in Hawaii - specific recommendations with rationale and justification to be reviewed and approved by the Governor to deliver to the BOE and DOE for their appropriate follow up action for what will be sent to the US Education Department for our students and schools.

Given the challenge - the expectations are high - you will need to be active participants, to be an innovator, an advocate, to be a listener, to be a critical thinker, to be a problem solver, to be a researcher and writer, to be a team player.

As a team, we will be guided by core values.

We will be guided by a commitment to transparency and openness.

We will also be guided by working in full partnership, collaboration, and teamwork with the Board of Education, Department of Education, our State Legislature, and all agencies, partners and stakeholders.

We will be guided by the essence of the concept of kina’ole and Governor Ige’s leadership beliefs of “doing the right thing, the right way, at the right time.”

The stars are aligned. The opportunity is unprecedented.

Heartfelt thanks and appreciation,

Darrel Galera

Chairperson, Governor’s ESSA Team