VIDE Deliverables from:
34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Committee on Education and Workforce Development
Hearing on 2-12-2021

February 28, 2021

Racquel Berry-Benjamin
Commissioner
1. **Provide a report (Assessments and Evaluations) to include the date, government agencies, of the decision to relocate Author A. Richards Jr. High School.**

The Virgin Islands Department of Education formed the New Schools Construction Advisory Board comprised of internal and external stakeholders in January of 2019 to provide guidance and shape the future development and care of educational facilities in the territory. The board accepted the charge to change the footprint of public education in the Virgin Islands as we know it and held its first meeting on January 30th, 2019.

Members of the board include VIDE leadership at the highest level, Commissioner Racquel Berry-Benjamin, VIDE senior leaders, instructional leaders, VIDE Operations staff representing the engineering, and maintenance units, parents, teachers, and students who serve alongside Senators, representatives of the Virgin Islands Board of Education, the American Federation of Teachers St. Croix chapter and St. Thomas/St. John chapter, the president of the University of the Virgin Islands, representatives non-profit organizations and of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, WAPA and other public and private sector leaders.

The New Schools Construction Advisory Board met regularly for 18 months to develop the VIDE’s first comprehensive educational facilities master plan. The board’s work began by meeting jointly to discuss Educational Specifications for rebuilding the territory’s public schools. VIDE collaborated with the American Institute of Architects, architects and engineers in the St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix to receive input. VIDE provided its first update to the 33rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands on February 25, 2019 during which it outlined the purpose of the master plan and the intent to change the footprint of education to achieve modernized schools with equity for our students. Subsequently, the board held a workshop to develop Guiding Principles on February 28, 2019.

The Guiding Principles and the feedback from local architects and engineers helped shape the Industry Standards document that establishes the technical criteria for future construction of schools. Workshops to develop the Industry Standards were held on March 15 and 28, 2019 in collaboration with VIDE engineer, the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) disaster recovery consultant, Witt O’Briens (WOB), the American Institute of Architects (AIA) leaders from its national committee on architecture for education, and FEMA.

The advisory board received and reviewed the first draft of the Industry Standards at its meeting in April 2019 and discussed concerns about the Arthur Richards school present location in a tsunami zone and explored possible alternate locations such as GVI-owned land at Mars Hill, the Alexander Henderson campus and the Evelyn Williams campus. Feedback from stakeholders were incorporated as VIDE and its team continued working on the Industry Standards and the advisory board finalized the Guiding Principles and adopted them. On May 22, 2019, a joint advisory board meeting was held with members on St. Croix and members
on St. Thomas/St. John meeting jointly via video conference to plan next steps. The committee met again the following week for continue discussion around implementing the K-8th model territory-wide and further discussions of the use of the Evelyn William campus, a review of flood maps, the location of the campus and where students reside, and a review of the acreage took place. Advisory board meetings took place in June 2019 to fine tune the recommendations for the facility master plan and discuss the programming needs for the new campuses for Arthur Richards PreK-8, Charlotte Amalie High School and Sprauve PreK-12.

Against the backdrop of the advisory board’s work, VIDE submitted the Industry Standards to FEMA for approval. In August, the advisory board held another joint planning workshop, received feedback from each district and reviewed the content for the recommendations to be presented to the public for feedback at public meetings in the fall of 2019. Feedback was provided on the consolidation plan to include moving Arthur Richards PreK-8 to the Evelyn Williams campus. The public meetings were held on St. John, St. Thomas, and St. Croix in October 2019. A special meeting was held with the 33rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands Education Committee Chair, the Honorable Senator Donna Frett-Gregory, to provide dialogue and answer questions. Copies of the presentation were provided to the Senator for her records and to share with colleagues, if needed.

On December 11, 2019, a joint advisory board meeting was held to review feedback from the October Town Hall meetings. There were no objections to Evelyn Williams being the site for the new Arthur Richards. In fact, the existing site is 17 acres in size and the Evelyn Williams site is 20 acres, while the Alexander Henderson site is 10 acres. Evelyn Williams gave us more space to design a state-of-the-art facility.

In January 2020, the DLR Group (DLR) was contracted to complete the educational Facility Master Plan for the territory. DLR conducted a series of workshops with the advisory board, completed assessments of all the sites and met with administrators. The master plan was discussed the Honorable Governor Albert Bryan. In June 2020, the Facility Master Plan was presented to the 33rd Legislature and then the public. A follow-up virtual public meeting was held to discuss the master plan. The Educational Facility Master Plan was completed on June 30, 2020.

Since the adoption of the master plan, DLR has been working on bridging documents to further define the new schools and modernizations, including the new Arthur Richards PreK-8 on the Evelyn Williams campus. The New Schools Construction Advisory Board is back in the swing of things and a joint meeting was held virtually to recap the work to date and discuss the next steps, including curriculum frameworks, training, and programming for the facilities.
The Facilities Master Plan is web-based, use the following link to view.
https://www.newschoolsvide.com/index1.html

Index - VIDE Educational Facility Master Plan
The Educational Facility Master Plan validates the VIDE’s studies through 2018-2019 and will inform the proposal of modernized and new construction in U.S. Virgin Islands Public Schools over the long-term to provide future-facing learning environments for students.
www.newschoolsvide.com

2. Provide a comprehensive report as it relates to the smarter balance numbers territory wide.

Following the adoption of the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards in 2010 and a five-year period of acclimating teachers and students to the more rigorous academic standards, the Smarter Balanced summative assessments were administered to Virgin Islands’ students for the first time in 2015.

- 2014 – Final use of VITAL tests to measure student achievement (manual testing)
- 2014 – Pilot of Smarter Balanced assessments (online)
- 2015-2017 – Smarter Balanced assessments administered
- 2018 – Due to Hurricanes Irma & Maria in September 2017, Smarter Balanced assessments were not administered to students
- 2019 – Smarter Balanced assessments administered, but with challenges.

The 2017 storms’ destruction of computer equipment and computer labs where the tests are administered proved to be a significant setback in the administration of the 2019 tests. Efforts are ongoing to replace equipment and restore computer labs. Furthermore, while the Department of Education has heavily invested in its network infrastructure and Internet, since the inception of the tests in 2015, there have been reoccurring issues with internet connectivity and power outages—services provided by
outside entities—during testing. This may negatively impact student performance, as focus is broken and may not be easily regained to successfully complete the tests.

Despite the challenges during testing, student achievement has increased in all subject areas and among all student subgroups in the Territory’s public schools, according to the results of the 2018-2019 Smarter Balanced assessments. While the 2019 results are encouraging, the Department of Education recognizes there is still much work to be done; thus, significantly improving student outcomes continues to be the Department’s primary focus.

**Territory-wide Overall Proficiency Rates for Grades 3-8 and 11 2017-2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>+4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>+1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As territory-wide scores are up, individual district performance reflects a similar upward trend. In the St. Thomas-St. John District, English and math skills improved in 2019. There were also improvements in the 2019 numbers for English in the St. Croix district, in which 27.3% met or exceeded standards. Although there was a slight decrease of -0.8 in Mathematics from 2017 to 2019 in the St. Croix district, students in that district performed higher than the territory’s average.

**Proficiency Rates by District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>English language arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>2018-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas/ St. John District</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix District</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to continue the promising upward trend of U.S. Virgin Islands’ student achievement, and to further expand and accelerate this trend, the V.I. Department of Education will transition from only reporting on proficiency and move toward multiple measures of academic progress. The Department will use a model of measuring student achievement through the implementation of a new accountability system. Schools will be measured on student growth—how much students show academic improvement in ELA and Mathematics from one year to the next.
To view the current results from the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessment and iReady Assessment see Appendix A. These are not final results as it is the interim assessment. The 2021 Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment testing window for 2021 is from March 8th to May 14th; final results will be available thereafter.

3. **Provide a ratio in the breakdown of in-person learning.**

The student to teacher ratio varies at this time and is expected to constantly change as parents decide to send their child/children to in-person learning later in the school year and/or decide to stop in-person learning and revert to learning from home. However, at this time, on average, the student to teacher ratio is 12:1 in both districts.

4. **Provide 3-5 years dropout rate, literacy & numeracy rate.**

The literacy & numeracy rate was previously provided in number 2. The dropout rates for the last five (5) years are below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Secondary Student Enrollment</th>
<th># of Students Dropout</th>
<th>Percent of Students Dropout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>6,435</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>6,140</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>5,167</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>5,107</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-2020</td>
<td>5,116</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Dropout is a student who:
- Was enrolled in a secondary school at some time during the previous school year and is not enrolled on October 1 of current school year; or
- Was not enrolled on October 1 of previous school year although expected to be in membership (i.e., was not reported as a dropout the year before); and
- Has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district approved educational program; and
- Does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
  1. Transfer to another public school district, private school, or state or district approved educational programs;
  2. Temporary school recognized absence due to suspension or illness; or
  3. Death.

Students who failed to report for class at the beginning of a school year are considered to be dropouts for the year in which they do not report.
5. **Provide clarity on a pass/fail rates and what is included.**

The pass/fail rate is the amount of students who passed versus the amount of students who failed. As per the VI Board of Education’s Promotion and Retention Policies, a 70%, or higher, are considered a passing score. Students who earn the required score of a 70%, or higher, in promotional subjects identified by the board, are considered passing. Similarly, students who do not earn the required score of 70%, or higher, in promotional subjects, are considered failing (See Appendixes B & C).

- **In the St. Croix District, the pass / fail rate for the 1st semester of the 2020-2021 school year is 95% / 5%.**

- **In the St. Thomas-St. John District, the pass / fail rate for the 1st semester of the 2020-2021 school year is 83% / 17%.**

6. **Provide the status of Adult Education during Covid.**

**ST. CROIX DISTRICT**

2019-2020 School Year

- There were nineteen (19) adult learners enrolled in the High School Day Program, thirty-four (34) adult learners enrolled in the High School Night Program, nine (9) adult learner enrolled in the General Educational Development (GED) Day program, twenty-five (25) adult learners enrolled in the American Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Night Program and four (4) adult learners enrolled in the English as a second language (ESL) Day Program.

- There were fifteen (15) adult learners who graduated from the High School Day Program, nineteen (19) adult learners who graduated from the High School Night Program, one (1) adult learner who graduated from the General Educational Development (GED) Day program, zero (0) adult learners who graduated from the American Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Night Program and zero (0) adult learners who graduated from the English as a second language (ESL) Day Program.  *(NOTE: Adult learners who did not graduate in 2020 are continuing students and will graduate when they complete the program).*
2020-2021 School Year

- There are seventeen (17) adult learners enrolled in the High School Day Program, twenty-six (26) adult learners enrolled in the High School Night Program, eighteen (18) adult learners enrolled in the General Education Development (GED) Program, twenty-two (22) adult learners enrolled in the American Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Night Program and four (4) adult learners enrolled in the English as a second language (ESL) Day Program.

ST. THOMAS- ST. JOHN DISTRICT

2019-2020 School Year

- There were seventy-five (75) adult learners enrolled in the Adult Continuing Education Day Program, two hundred six (206) adult learners enrolled in the Adult Continuing Education Night Program, thirty-nine (39) adult learner enrolled in the General Educational Development (GED) Day program, one hundred twenty-two (122) adult learners enrolled in the American Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Night Program and eighty three (83) adult learners enrolled in the English as a second language (ESL) Night Program.

- There were zero (0) adult learners who graduated from the Adult Continuing Education Day Program, twenty-nine (29) adult learners who graduated from the Adult Continuing Education Night Program, zero (0) adult learner who graduated from the General Educational Development (GED) Day program, zero (0) adult learners who graduated from the American Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Night Program and zero (0) adult learners enrolled in the English as a second language (ESL) Night Program. (NOTE: Adult learners who did not graduate in 2020 are continuing students and will graduate when they complete the program).

2020-2021 School Year

- There are fifty-six (56) adult learners enrolled in the Adult Continuing Education Day Program, sixty-four (64) adult learners enrolled in the Adult Continuing Education Night Program, eighteen (18) adult learner enrolled in the General Educational Development (GED) Day program, fifty-seven (57) adult learners enrolled in the American Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Night Program and thirty-nine (39) adult learners enrolled in the English as a second language (ESL) Night Program.
7. **Provide a report of school re-opening requirements.**

In order to re-open schools for in-person learning during the COVID-19 Health pandemic, the V.I. Department of Education had to meet the standards set out in the VI Department of Health’s Re-opening of Schools Guidelines (See Appendix D).

The Department of Health is required to conduct walk-throughs to ensure each school is equipped with the necessary safety resources before opening. To date, walkthroughs have been conducted by the V.I. Health Department, the V.I. Fire Department and the V.I. Board of Education. The Board of Education passed a resolution dated February 26, 2021 certifying the reopening of the following six (6) schools in the St. Croix District:

1. Pearl B. Larsen Prek-8 School
2. Juanita Gardine K-8th School
3. Lew Muckle Elementary School
4. Alfredo Andrews Elementary School
5. Eulalie Rivera K-8th School
6. Ricardo Richards Elementary School

and granted conditional certification for the Claude O. Markoe school and Arthur A. Richards K-8 school which will be operating out of the St. Croix Educational Complex Facility (See Appendix E).

Early preparations for students and staff to safely return to in-person instruction began in the summer of 2020 when the Department gained access to begin spending funds through Congress’s CARES Act. Since then, schools have been outfitted with the necessary items in compliance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention requirements for in-person learning:

- Signage throughout campuses reminding students and staff of safety protocols, i.e., staying six feet apart, washing hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, wearing masks, etc.
- Floor decals or paintings depicting the six-feet social-distancing requirement
- Dispensers strategically placed throughout campuses to readily provide soap, hand sanitizer and paper towels
- Hand washing stations
- Classrooms with students’ desks arranged six feet apart and teachers’ desks outfitted with an L-shaped Plexiglas barrier
- All bathrooms fully repaired and functioning

Using the VI Department of Health’s Reopening of Schools Guidance and the VIDE’s Reopening of Schools Hybrid Plan, schools have created an action plan that includes
procedures “from the time students, faculty and staff arrive on campus until they leave the school grounds for the day.” These include:

- Temperature checks when arriving
- Procedures for breakfast and lunch
- Mask breaks
- Protocols for addressing students and employees with an elevated temperature

The same process is occurring in the St. Thomas-St. John District to reopen schools for in-person learning.

8. **Provide a report on the number of cleaning contracts between the districts.**

There are 9 schools with cleaning contracts in the St. Thomas-St. John District; there are no cleaning contracts in the St. Croix District. The VIDE provided testimony to the Committee on Education and Workforce Development on February 12, 2021 explaining the Department’s decision on cleaning contracts which started that Department currently has 57 full-time custodial workers in the St. Croix district, and 44 full-time custodial workers in the St. Thomas/St. John district, with the ability to provide sufficient cleaning for that portion of school facilities returning for in-class instruction for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. The Department is currently re-evaluating its need for contractual janitorial services in both districts for the next school year (2021-2022). The Department’s plan at this time is to increase the number of full-time custodial workers at the VIDE and utilize contractual services for biannual cleaning services in each district.