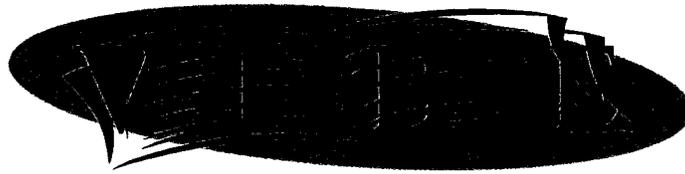


GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION



BOARD OFFICERS

Nandi Sékou, Esq
Chairman/President

Terrence T. Joseph
Vice-Chairman/Vice-President

LaVerne Slack
Secretary

St. Croix Members
Winona A. Hendricks
Terrence T. Joseph
Martial Webster, Esq.
Mary L. Moorhead

St. Thomas/St. John Members
Judy M. Gomez, Esq.
Arah C. Lockhart
Nandi Sékou, Esq.
LaVerne Slack

At Large Member
Oswin Sewer, Sr. (deceased)

Acting Executive Director
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL REGARDING:
THE DUTIES OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Good morning Senator Terrence Nelson, other Members of the 31st Legislature, Members of the Youth Advisory Council, and the viewing and listening audiences. I am Patricia Schrader-Cooke, Acting Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Board of Education. I am here today offering testimony on behalf of the 17th Elected Virgin Islands Board of Education.

Just like the US Department of Education mandates that we have highly qualified teachers in the classroom, the Virgin Islands Board of Education is constituted by 9 highly qualified members, whose collective experience in education and related areas span more than 200 years. The Board members are as follows:

MISSION STATEMENT

The Virgin Islands Board of Education is committed to its vision and will promote the transformation of the structure of existing public education through: 1. governance over the public education system; 2. improved student, parent, teacher relationship; 3. comprehensive community engagement; 4. standards that promote high academic achievement; 5. creation of an environment that is conducive to effective communication; 6. enhanced quality of professional development for all; 7. provision of adequate resources to achieve our vision, goals and objectives.

VISION STATEMENT

To ensure that each child is provided with the best quality education which promotes our history and culture, guarantees academic achievement and builds strong communities.

From St. Thomas:

Attorney Nandi Sékou- Chairman/President

Attorney Judy M. Gomez

Arah C. Lockhart

LaVerne M. Slack - Secretary

From St. Croix:

Winona P. Hendricks

Terrence T. Joseph – Vice-Chairman/Vice-President

Mary L. Moorhead

Attorney Martial Webster

From St. John:

Oswin A. Sewer, Sr. recently passed away. (As per the Virgin Islands Code, the Governor with approval of the Legislature will be responsible for appointing a new member of the Board to take Mr. Sewer's place)

The Virgin Islands Board of Education is an elected Board, and the members serve four year terms. The goal of this robust body is to devise policies and rules and regulations to educate all students to become competent, literate, responsible citizens, capable of making successful life choices within the global community.

The Board is responsible for the general policy and direction of education in the Virgin Islands. And its authority is executed in accordance with the United States Constitution, the Revised Organic Act, Virgin Islands laws and regulations.

Collectively the Board works to ensure that each student and the community are provided with the best education to enhance academic achievement, pride and self-worth. This is done through programs of quality academic and vocational instruction that include our history and culture.

The Board's work consists of:

- ***Maintaining effective*** Governance over the Public Education System
- ***Improving*** student, parent, teacher relationships
- ***Fostering*** comprehensive community engagement
- ***Setting and achieving*** standards that promote high academic achievement
- ***Creating and nurturing*** an environment that is conducive to effective communication
- ***Enhancing*** the quality of professional development for all staff **and**
- ***Ensuring*** that there are adequate resources to achieve our vision, goals and objectives.

In addition, the Virgin Islands Code mandates that the Board

- Visits each school while in session at least once a year (17 VIC, § 22)
- Hear complaints regarding school matters (17 VIC, § 23)

Policy Rules and Regulations Committee

This committee is responsible for researching and writing all school policies. They must draft policies for the committee's review, public comment and finally for full board approval.

School plants and Facilities

This Committee has oversight over all Department of Education Buildings, that is to include all schools and administrative office buildings in the Territory. The Committee conducts regular site visits to Department of Education Facilities and makes recommendations for repairs and improvements.

Public/Private Sector Liaison Committee

This committee is charged with the duty of identifying strategies to engage the community and education stakeholders in the Board's programs and forming partnerships with the private sector to promote the goals and the vision of the Board. Some of their activities include town hall meetings, participation in Agriculture and Food Fair, Information tables at shopping centers, and radio appearances. Just last Saturday, there was a Walk for Education with the Firewalkers of St. Croix. These outreach activities serve as excellent opportunities to promote the Board's programs.

grade. The Common Core focuses on developing the critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills students will need to be successful.

The Common Core Standards were conceived when two groups the National Governor's Association (of which our present Governor the Honorable Kenneth Mapp and Past Governor John P DeJongh were members) and The Council of Chief State School Officers (of which our present Commissioner of Education, Dr. Sharon McCollum is a member) launched the effort to make sure that all students regardless of where they live are graduating high school prepared for college and careers. It doesn't tell teachers how to teach but only what must be taught. The Common Core Standards focuses on developing the critical thinking, problem solving and analytical skills students will need to be successful. The Standards establish clear and consistent guidelines for what every child should know and be able to do in math and language arts. The Virgin Islands adopted these standards in 2010 and implemented the Standards in 2012.

Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium is a service provided by the University of California, and it is governed by member states and territories, the Virgin Islands is a member. The Consortium creates



Recently, the Board also conducted the Reach Higher Campaign Open House on the island of St. Thomas. St. Croix will host this event on Thursday, July 30th. This is the First Lady Michelle Obama's Campaign to encourage college bound students to complete their college education and advance beyond high school in various academic and advance training pursuits. Students signed pledge sheets and committed to completing higher education. They were given a pledge card, certificate, luggage tag and a snack as they picked up their financial assistance checks.

This is only a glimpse of the roles and responsibilities of the Board. The Board has six Regular scheduled meetings a year, but committees meet at regular intervals and special meetings are also called. The work of the Board never stops.

One of the things that the Board is monitoring is the Common Core Standards training and teacher preparedness as well as the Smarter Balance assessment.

The Common Core is a set of standards and clear consistent guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in Mathematics and English Language Arts from kindergarten through 12th

Common Core State Standards aligned tests. The Territory is using the Smarter Balance test as its standardized test.

What does the common core mean for you? It means that the content that you learn in your school is equal to the content that all students in other parts of the country are learning. It means that you will be prepared to enter a world in which colleges and businesses are demanding more than ever before. It also means that you will be prepared for success after graduation.

What does this mean for teachers? The new standards will provide a way for teachers to measure student progress throughout the school year and ensure that students are on the pathway to success in their academic careers. Since this is a national initiative, teachers in the territory will have an opportunity to collaborate with teachers across the country to develop curricula, materials and assessments.

In the years to come we expect to see positive outcomes from implementation of the Common Core in the Territory, such as higher graduation rates and a lesser need for basic skills courses on the college level.

In closing, I can tell you that the members of the Virgin Islands Board of Education always hear a lot from government officials, principals, staff,

- Prescribe courses of study upon the recommendation of the Commissioner (17 VIC, § 41)
- Approve free textbooks used in the schools (17 VIC, § 42)
- Hear appeals pertaining to student expulsion and/or suspension (17 VIC, § 91)
- Prescribe rules and regulations and establish criteria for the certification, selection, and appointment of teachers, supervisors, principals, librarians and other professionals of the Department of Education. (17 VIC, § 121)
- Approve the dismissal of any professional employee (17 VIC, § 127)
- Approve a leave of absence granted any employee (17 VIC, § 128)
- Approve standards and procedures for evaluating professional personnel (17 VIC, § 129)
- Administer loan, grant and scholarship programs for students and teachers (17 VIC, §§ 184) (c) to 190 (x); This year the board received 1, 389 financial aid applications and expects to award over 2 million dollars to eligible students.
- Promulgate rules and regulations to operate nonpublic schools within the Territory of the Virgin Islands (17 VIC, § 194).

To help accomplish all of these duties the Board has a number of standing committees to address the key areas:

Professional Staff Certification and Higher Education Committee

The Committee is responsible for reviewing the credentials of professional staff to make sure that each candidate for certification is qualified according to the Board's certification policies to be certified to work in the Public Schools in the Virgin Islands. This means that every teacher, principal, assistant principal, social worker, psychologist, counselor and other professionals in the territory must apply, obtain and maintain certification from the Board to be eligible to become employed in the public school system in the Virgin Islands. Additionally, the certification committee sponsors courses, and workshops designed to provide materials to aid professional staff applicants in achieving certification. The Virgin Islands History and Culture Institute is a week long course that the Board provides that gives applicants the opportunity to meet the statutory requirement of Virgin Islands History.

teachers, and parents. But they also know that that the most important voice that it can hear is yours. You are the reason that the Board exists and the Board's ultimate responsibility is to ensure your success in school and beyond.