



Virgin Islands Department of Education

**Committee on Education & Workforce Development
Senate Hearing Testimony**

Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D.
March 23, 2023

I. Introduction

Good morning, Honorable Marise C. James, Chairwoman of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, Vice-Chair, Senator Donna Frett-Gregory, other members of the committee, Senator Dianne T. Capehart, Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff, Senator Javan E. James, Sr., Senator Franklin D. Johnson, and all other senators present, ladies and gentlemen, and the listening and viewing audience.

I am Commissioner Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington, and with me, this morning are Assistant Commissioner Victor Somme III, Deputy Commissioner of Fiscal Affairs, Kemo Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Renee Charleswell, Insular Superintendent of the St. Croix District, Mrs. Ericilda Ottley-Herman, Insular Superintendent of the St. Thomas-St. John District, Dr. Stefan Jürgen, Acting Director of Human Resources; Mrs. Melene Cooper-Shelford, Chief Operations Officer; Alan Fleming, Director of Plants and Facilities; Davidson Charlemagne, VIDE Architect; Chaneel Callwood, and School Safety Managers, Ivan Williams, and Jaime Roebuck.

First, let me thank this body for your commitment and spirit of collaboration with the department since I entered this new position. The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) is committed to providing a high-quality, equitable learning experience in partnership with families and the community so all students are prepared to thrive in life. At VIDE, we are Reforming, Rebuilding, and Rebranding public education in the territory. We are committed to transforming today's learners into tomorrow's leaders, and with that, we are prepared to ensure that we create opportunities for all students.

Our goal is to prepare a pathway that allows every student to successfully transition into college, the military, or the workplace. At VIDE, we have lots to do as we shift the mindsets of all employees to a student-centered one and provide targeted support to our schools so that they have what they need to meet the needs of our children. Our department focuses on developing the whole child, engaging families, partnering with the community, and working together as a team to ensure that our educational system is effective as we serve our clients, who are our students and parents. We have already begun our campaign to establish our partnerships because we understand that every single person has a part to play in educating the territory's children. We will continue to build back the trust of the territory in public education. Here at VIDE, we are #publicschoolproud.

II. VIDE Performance Updates

The department has been working on its strategic plan that aligns schools, districts, and the state with a shared focus on student outcomes. Schools have finalized their school improvement plans and budgets. Each school will receive an initial budget of \$250,000.00 to begin their work and, moving forward, will have an allocated budget within the Consolidated Grant Application. We realize that the one size fits all concept is ineffective in bridging the achievement gap. Therefore, building administrators have been charged with creating goals with detailed actions unique to their buildings to help our students close those gaps. We are empowering our principals to lead that charge and bringing back site-based management. Now that school plans

have been submitted, the districts will revise their plans to align with the schools, and then the state will be aligned with the districts. To ensure the accountability of the entire organization, it is imperative that measurable targets for achievement must be set so that the department can effectively measure its successes and identify challenges.

Accountability is critical to the overarching goals of improved student outcomes. We all know that what gets monitored gets done. We are streamlining our processes so that there is a complete alignment of funding to the plans and key performance indicators.

Therefore, monitoring tools will be utilized to ensure adequate growth in the set goals. We are committed to communicating our successes and challenges to all stakeholders. You have my full commitment to be transparent, open, and honest with my communication.

Agency Reform Plan

At VIDE, we have identified three organizational challenges that will be addressed based on our immediate needs. They include improving our instructional practices to create individualized plans for our students, updating our outdated standard operating procedures in some cases; we are operating under policies from the '80s, and digitizing operational and administrative processes to ensure better and more efficient service for our clients. This Agency Reform Plan, as mandated by Governor Bryan, calls for improvements in support of teacher development to ensure that teachers improve their instructional practices. This includes focusing on early childhood education, expanding opportunities for students in career and technical education, and implementing site-based management. Regarding updating standard operating policies and procedures, VIDE will review, update and establish standard procedures to improve the organization's efficiency and enhance quality controls. Lastly, VIDE will examine its operational services and look for ways to digitize the systems, such as cash management and alert systems.

Below please find detailed timelines for each initiative:

Improve the quality of support to teacher development to ensure teachers strengthen their instructional practices to improve teaching and learning. This includes increasing literacy in Pre-K – 3rd, CTE expansion and site-based management.

Table 1

| Milestone | Estimated Completion |
|--|----------------------|
| Conduct a needs assessment (completed) | 02/2023 |
| Procure services for professional learning (procurement process) | 02/2023 |
| Procure contract for professional development (procurement process) | 04/2023 |
| Create professional development growth plans | 06/2023 |
| Provide needed resources to ensure all leaders and teachers are certified | 12/2023 |

Review, update, and establish standard operating procedures to improve efficiencies and enhance quality controls.

Table 2

| Milestone | Estimated Completion |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Attain feedback from the team relative to the current implementation of policies (completed) | 1/21/2023 |
| Complete policy template (completed) | 02/2023 |
| Submit draft template (completed) | 02/2023 |
| Review and revise if needed (in progress) | 03/2023 |
| Attain approval (in progress) | 03/2023 |
| Collaborate with the team to develop a list of needed SOPPS (new and/or updates) | 05/2023 |
| Revise policies and procedures | 09/2023 |
| Upload policies to SharePoint | 12/2023 |

Digitize VIDE to streamline operational and administrative processes. This includes digitization of per-diems, leave slips, payments, personnel records, certifications, student registration, report cards, transcripts, work orders, and the strategic plan.

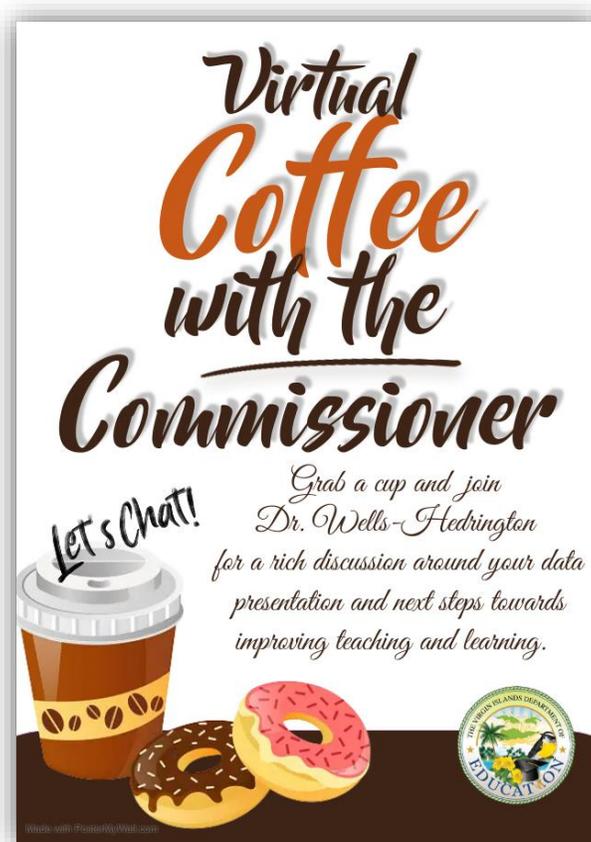
Table 3

| Milestone | Estimated Completion |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Complete needs assessment (completed) | 1/21/2023 |
| Identify current systems not implemented with fidelity (completed) | 2/10/2023 |
| Create a thorough software transition plan | 4/7/2023 |
| Conduct a full technology audit | 5/5/2023 |
| Define roles and responsibilities | 5/5/2023 |
| Ensure communication | 5/12/2023 |
| Procure needed software programs | 6/23/2023 |
| Provide additional training on current programs | 07/30/2023 |
| Automate processes | 11/30/2023 |

State of the Union

In January and February 2023, VIDE engaged in School Site Data Presentations (see Addendum A). I, State level Personnel, Senate Officials, the Virgin Islands Board of Education members, and other stakeholders, such as the VI Department of Labor, met with individual school principals, who presented the “state of the union” data presentation for their respective sites. The presentations allowed school principals to be completely transparent with the information that projected the current state of their sites. Additionally, all stakeholders were able to ask questions and gather data to assist in providing our schools with the needed support. Once all presentations were completed, Virtual Coffee debrief meetings were held with each principal where honest conversations occurred, and the next steps were identified (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



The data presentations allowed principals to showcase their schools, but they also revealed areas of concern, including aspects of teaching and learning. Stakeholders were able to get an accurate picture of each of our sites and what schools are doing to address student outcomes, including successes and challenges. Principals were given a template that identified areas of focus. They were allowed to show us the true essence of their schools. It was the first time this had ever been done, and the administrators received it well. The presentations confirmed that student outcomes must remain at the center of what we do at VIDE (Virgin Islands Department

of Education). Those meetings showed us the work needed to support our schools, whether through training or funding, which the administrators clearly outlined. For example, there is a need for additional professional development opportunities around data analysis and data decision-making across the territory. There is also a need to support teachers in acquiring their certification, and of course, teacher shortages remain a huge concern.

Further, the data analysis showed some levels of growth in some schools on the iReady diagnostic assessment, which is aligned with the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Still, in some schools, they were not showing significant improvements. Based on the presentations, we could see which principals had a strong mastery of being instructional leaders while others were better managers. We find that throughout the territory, we have multiple data sources that are not being used to drive the decisions being made. A shift must occur in our practices to align goals with identified needs and measurements in place to monitor our successes and failures. During the presentations, schools set goals that will be measured yearly. This is our contract with principals as we measure their growth. They stated what they were doing; hence, what data did they have to support growth? We have to be the change we want to see, and accountability is essential to the success of our work. Principals will be back in May to update the panel on what gains were made and the next steps for the upcoming school year.

Smarter Balanced Data Analysis

Table 4

| School Year | School Year Desc | Subject | Number of Students | | | | | Percentage | | | | |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | Student Tested | Below Standard | Near Standard | Met Standard | Exceeded Standard | Below Standard | Near Standard | Met Standard | Exceeded Standard | Met and Exceed Standard |
| 2014 | 14-15 | ELA | 7153 | 4248 | 1695 | 979 | 231 | 59.4 | 23.7 | 13.7 | 3.2 | 16.9 |
| 2015 | 15-16 | ELA | 6902 | 3866 | 1691 | 1048 | 297 | 56.0 | 24.5 | 15.2 | 4.3 | 19.5 |
| 2016 | 16-17 | ELA | 6803 | 3714 | 1697 | 1104 | 288 | 54.6 | 24.9 | 16.2 | 4.2 | 20.5 |
| 2017 | 17-18 | ELA | 4233 | 1826 | 1241 | 863 | 303 | 43.1 | 29.3 | 20.4 | 7.2 | 27.5 |
| 2018 | 18-19 | ELA | 5719 | 2658 | 1644 | 1088 | 329 | 46.5 | 28.7 | 19.0 | 5.8 | 24.8 |
| 2020 | 20-21 | ELA | 4131 | 2284 | 993 | 652 | 202 | 55.3 | 24.0 | 15.8 | 4.9 | 20.7 |
| 2021 | 21-22 | ELA | 4859 | 2942 | 1066 | 648 | 203 | 60.5 | 21.9 | 13.3 | 4.2 | 17.5 |
| 2014 | 14-15 | MATH | 7209 | 5339 | 1393 | 393 | 84 | 74.1 | 19.3 | 5.5 | 1.2 | 6.6 |
| 2015 | 15-16 | MATH | 6892 | 4984 | 1443 | 379 | 86 | 72.3 | 20.9 | 5.5 | 1.2 | 6.7 |
| 2016 | 16-17 | MATH | 6744 | 4780 | 1389 | 445 | 130 | 70.9 | 20.6 | 6.6 | 1.9 | 8.5 |
| 2017 | 17-18 | MATH | 4194 | 2883 | 970 | 265 | 76 | 68.7 | 23.1 | 6.3 | 1.8 | 8.1 |
| 2018 | 18-19 | MATH | 5695 | 3675 | 1448 | 426 | 146 | 64.5 | 25.4 | 7.5 | 2.6 | 10 |
| 2020 | 20-21 | MATH | 4179 | 2765 | 943 | 355 | 116 | 66.2 | 22.6 | 8.5 | 2.8 | 11.3 |
| 2021 | 21-22 | MATH | 4855 | 3746 | 812 | 234 | 63 | 77.2 | 16.7 | 4.8 | 1.3 | 6.1 |

*Please note that those students who fall into the near standard percentile would be your bubble students who would be targeted to get them to proficiency.

Middle of the Year iReady Data

i-Ready's placement levels are criterion-referenced, reflecting what students are expected to know at each grade level and in each content area. The following Figures 2 and 3 show where USVI students have placed after completing the mathematics middle of year diagnostics.

Figure 2

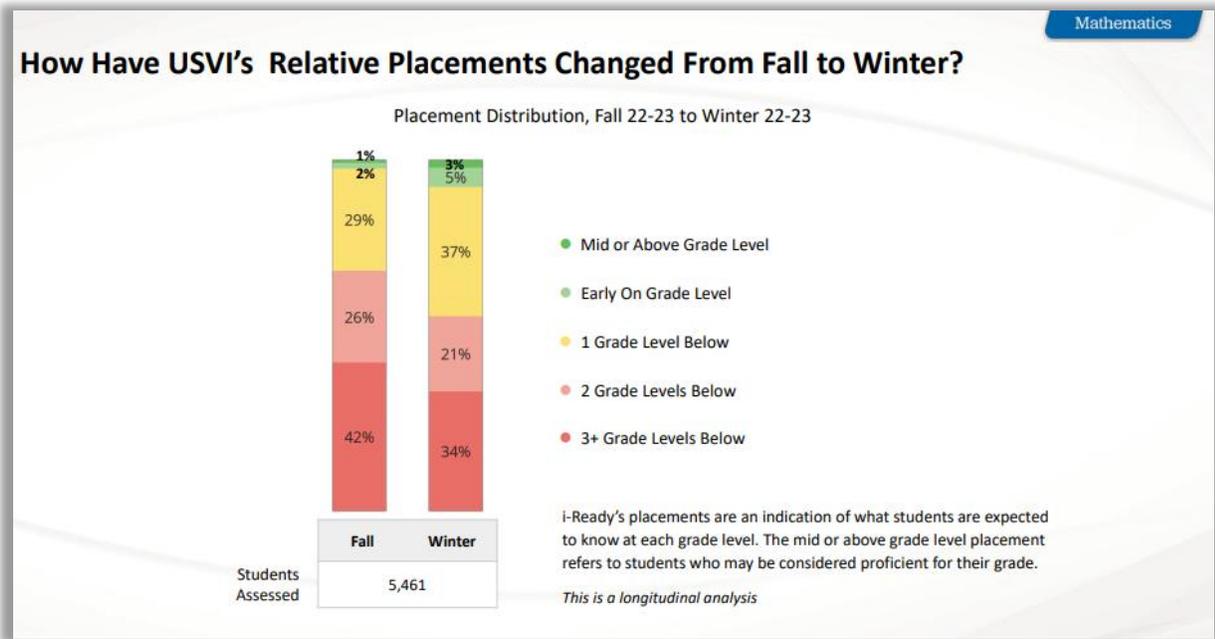
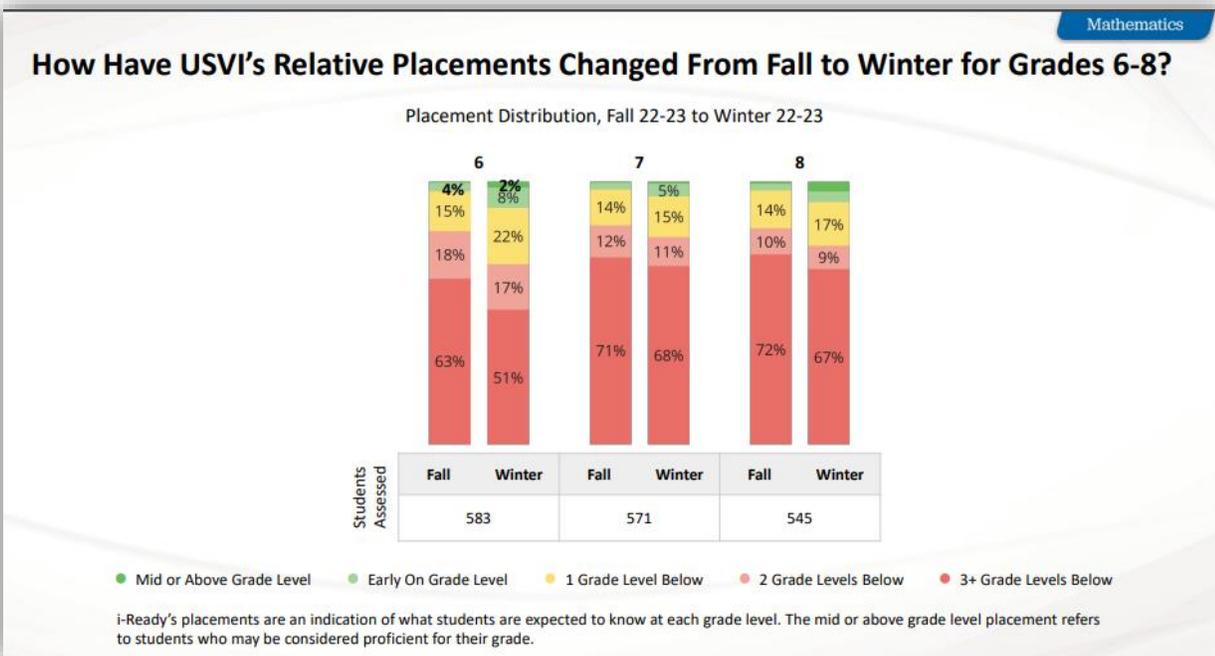


Figure 3



III. Updates on Reforming, Rebuilding & Rebranding

Reforming

Professional Development

Establishing a continuous improvement plan for professional development is critical. Based on the needs identified by the schools, plans are being put into place to provide professional development opportunities based on the needs and direction the districts are moving. Funding has been used to streamline processes within the department that, include providing resources through our PowerSchool contract to where administrators can link teacher performance to their professional growth plans and assign professional development modules to support in areas of weakness. Times have changed, and leadership styles must evolve.

Leadership and management training contractual services are being procured for senior leadership and building administrators. Succession planning is a priority, and districts will expand and create programs to allow for the workforce development that we want to promote. At VIDE, we want to invest in those who have invested in our children. One area that was mentioned in our school presentations that must be supported is differentiated instruction and personalized learning. We all know that one size does not fit all, and our teachers must be supported as they meet the individual needs of our students. We also intend to capture the pockets of excellence throughout the territory and create a home-grown database of great teaching to assist those struggling with their craft. No more focusing on only the infrastructure; it is time that we shift the paradigm to ensure that the instruction provided in our classrooms is relevant and rigorous to allow our students to become the innovators, creators, critical thinkers, and problem solvers we know they can be.

Site-based Management

Our school improvement plans are finalized, and budgets were submitted for approval. Revisions are on the way to reprogram federal funding to give our schools \$250,000.00 to execute their plans to improve student outcomes. This gives our administrators and educators the flexibility to implement systems for improvement unique to their population and needs. The desired shift in instruction requires consistent monitoring and support of teachers by administrators. Moving to a more data-driven growth model is imperative, and supporting our stakeholders in interpreting that data is required.

Getting all leaders to use data in their decision-making processes will help them to identify the needs and create plans to address them. Monitoring and providing feedback are non-negotiable tasks that administrators must perform daily. They will be expected to conduct walk-throughs daily in their classrooms and, in some cases, model what good instruction and best practices look like. It's a new wind in VIDE, and the focus will be placed on teaching and learning.

Career and Technical Education Expansion

The USVI's Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are being redesigned to strengthen existing and developing new CTE offerings that align with the Territory's Labor Market demands as well as to enhance CTE curriculums. This will ensure that the curriculum is infused with challenging academic, college and career readiness standards and employability skills. Career and Technical Education enhances the student experience by providing engaging and relatable courses that are rigorous, relevant and provides students with knowledge and skills needed to prepare them academically, socially, and mentally for post-graduation transition. The state office is currently working on articulation agreements with the districts to present to post-secondary institutions. This will ensure a seamless transition for CTE students at the secondary and adult post-secondary technical training levels who desire to pursue advanced degrees. This will also guarantee that our CTE students are offered occupational entry and exit point in their chosen pathways towards nation industry recognized certification and workforce possibilities.

Next Steps for the CTE Expansion

1. Establishing training and professional development for District CTE counselors, teachers, and administrators at the secondary and post-secondary levels on
 - a. Career planning for middle schoolers
 - b. Utilizing research-based information to engage all students (including elementary) in career exploration activities
 - c. Building a CTE portfolio
 - d. Identifying and integrating support services for students and their parents
2. Business and industry outreach and integration for On the Job and soft skills training
3. Marketing and promotion of programs
4. CTE curriculum framework development
5. Outreach for all stakeholders
6. Expansion of CTE programs (Private, SPED, Adults)
7. Career and Technical College
8. Expand CTE Annual Fair (Alternate islands)
9. Collaborate with CTE board and VI Board of Education
10. Recruitment/outreach efforts

Programs on the Immediate Horizon

- Aviation- Pilot certification, aviation mechanics, etc.... (Secondary (STTJ))
- Electric Vehicle Certification (Post-Secondary – Territorial)
- Dental Hygienist (Post-Secondary Territorial)
- Filmography (Secondary –Territorial)
- CNA, LPN (Secondary STX)
- Grow your own – Education Track

The State Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education proposed ideas to the CTE Board for differentiated instructor recruitment and compensation approaches. CTE Board announced

that they are moving forward with trying to implement some of the differentiated approaches for which CTE instructors are required to have to facilitate recruitment and onboarding (e.g., contracted on an hourly basis to teach their specific trade or co-teaching components between an academic teacher and technical trade instructor). We look forward to the CTE program expanding into a vehicle that leads students to success.

Pre-K – 3rd Grade Initiative

As the Department works to ensure that all early childhood teachers meet the required certification as mandated by law, we must also be intentional with addressing our early childhood learners. The early years, according to research, will determine a child's success. The pre-K to 3rd-grade years is when a child learns to read. Beyond those grade levels, they are reading to learn. The Department recognizes a need to train our teachers in the science of teaching reading. As such, targeted and intentional support measures have been budgeted for through federal funding.

Our literacy and numeracy data for 3rd grade unequivocally indicate that VIDE has lots of work. The Department's focus will be on ensuring that adequate resources and ongoing-targeted training and support are available to teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. We will collaborate with Human Services to ensure consistent resource use and instructional practices to prepare our early learners for kindergarten. Change can only occur if we make concerted efforts to advocate for change. Students have the will but need to gain the skills to read.

We must do better. We often speak about students with attention deficit disorder, but our students are actually suffering because the attention is not on them. Illiteracy is the pipeline to prison and poverty. Students are not able to crack the codes to unlock phonics. This is because we continue to stray away from the basics and have adopted other methods of teaching reading, such as whole language. The Department is going back to what has worked in the past, and we will focus on the science of teaching reading. We must focus on phonics and phonemic awareness. Students must have the opportunity to develop vocabulary through writing and speaking. Students must also be able to read and discuss what they are reading. Comprehension is critical. Small group instruction and differentiating instruction should be seen in all classrooms across the territory. Continuing our efforts to have Pre-K programs in all our schools is a goal of the Department.

Utilizing the existing platforms for intervention with fidelity will allow for additional support for students. We have successfully adopted the Math curriculum and have begun training our teachers on the resources, which will continue throughout the 2022-23 school year. All curriculum resources can be found at #GoOpenUSVI. As we have developed a literacy plan, we are working on a numeracy plan that will be rolled out once completed.

Rebuilding

Recovery Projects Updates

The VIDE Office of New Schools continues to plan and implement new school construction and school modernization projects. The first new school is being built for the New Arthur Richards PreK-8 School at the Evelyn Williams Campus on St. Croix. This project is the first major output of the Educational Facility Master Plan. The path to this milestone included multiple assessments, a review of the initial cost offer from FEMA, the development of Industry Standards to establish a common definition of what constitutes a modern school, a review of the initial FEMA cost, the development of bridging documents to establish the cost of a modern school in the Virgin Islands and prepare VIDE's cost estimate, meetings with FEMA to negotiate costs, a Summit with FEMA to finalize costs, a design-build solicitation process, kick-off activities that included a meet the contractor event, early demolition projects, and most recently, attainment of a favorable Federal Consistency Determination from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR).

Highlights of the next tranche of projects include:

- Design-Build Solicitation for New Central HS, New Charlotte Amalie HS, and Modernized Boschulte PK-8 (currently out for bid)
- Demolition of Selected Buildings at Guy H. Benjamin Center (currently out for bid)
- Design and CMR Construction Services for New Sprauve PK-12
- Design and CMR Construction Services for New Claude O. Markoe PK-8
- Design-Build of New Alexander Henderson PK-8

The New Schools Construction Advisory Board continues to be engaged and informed regarding the progress of implementing the Facility Master Plan, including plans to add a swimming pool to the New Arthur Richards PreK-8 School. Planning meetings will be held with stakeholders to provide input into the completed design for the new school. The modernization of the Gladys Abraham campus is nearing completion as equipment and furniture orders are being placed for the facility. The site will be the new hub of Career and Technical Education and Day Adult Education. The opening is set for August 2023.

Pictures of the Gladys Abraham modernization are shared below (See Figure 4).

Figure 4



As stated, a work order system has been identified, the MAXIMO program, to allow for more accountability in maintenance and training on this system and roll out will occur in the school year 2023-2024. Opportunities for existing staff to receive certification will be offered in partnership with the skills center in St. Thomas and the CTEC in St. Croix. We have a depleted workforce in the St. Thomas district; therefore, it is important to identify funding to hire the much-needed skilled personnel.

For the school year 2023, VIDE will have an agreement where CTE students can assist the maintenance division in addressing routine maintenance issues within our buildings during the school year and summer months. Maximizing human capital is also a prudent way to utilize our young apprentices within the various programs. The Operations division will roll out its preventative maintenance plan in SY 2023 to allow for more productivity and utilization of resources and its training plan for employees as well. Scopes have been finalized and solicited to establish service contracts with local vendors to allow our maintenance staff access to resources to address the needs of our schools and activity sites. A petty cash system also has been instituted in both districts to give the maintenance division access to \$50,000.00 to address emergencies that can arise at any given time at our aged facilities.

Next Steps

School Safety and Security improvements are being made to kitchens at several schools on St. Croix, especially regarding fire and life safety of electrical components and gas lines. A contractor has started work at Claude O. Markoe Elementary School, another contractor has been selected to upgrade the kitchen at Eulalie Rivera PK-8, and a contractor has been selected to upgrade the kitchens at St. Croix Central High School, John H. Woodson Junior High School, Juanita Gardine PK-8 School, Lew Muckle Elementary School, and Ricardo Richards Elementary School. The upgrades will improve health and hygiene in the kitchens, provide safe electrical and gas utilities, improve grease traps, and provide proper equipment drainage. The interior surfaces will also be refreshed to reduce porous surfaces, repair cracks, and seal openings to reduce the spread of diseases such as COVID-19. A design-build RFP is being prepared to build security fencing and, in some cases, perimeter walls at schools in the St. Thomas/St. John District.

Rebranding

Stakeholder engagement is essential to the Department's efforts to build trust in public education. Parents must feel valued and know they are a piece to the education puzzle. Initiatives such as Parent University, parent seminars, conferences, and classes will be provided to assist our parents in being better equipped to support their children. Parents are a child's biggest advocate. VIDE (Virgin Islands Department of Education) will host events to encourage and foster the relationship between school and home. Due to the demographic shift in our student population, there is a need to put structured measures in place to support our students and families.

The VIDE is launching a new website, app, and systems to digitize operations to make them more accessible for parents and internal stakeholders in 2023. Community partnerships are also crucial to the work of the Department of Education, so we will be looking for businesses and organizations to adopt a school. Community partnerships must be established, and systems put in place to provide said opportunities for our learners. Celebrating student success is what we are promoting in the Department. We are in the business of educating children and allowing them to improve what we do at VIDE.

In SY 23, the Commissioner will launch a student advisory board where representatives chosen by their peers will meet monthly and work with leadership to improve the level of service provided to the student population. I believe that students must have a voice, and getting their feedback is important.

VIDE has improved the branding of the Department. We have been transparent in our updates and will continue to meet our stakeholders where they are to keep the message accurate and timely regarding VIDE updates. At VIDE, we must drive the narrative and not allow things to be skewed from what is accurate and true. A revised marketing plan will be developed to guide the various communication mediums and protocols.

Employee recognition is of utmost importance annually. We are getting ready to launch the Commissioner's Corner (Community Connect), which would allow the community to dialog with the Commissioner openly as I share the plans of the Department and update them on issues centered on the teaching and learning of our students. We have visited numerous outlets to share information and will continue those efforts. As the end users, the only way for the Department to be effective is for us to hear from you regularly. The websites and the school pages must be periodically updated and will give the community a clear understanding of the great things happening at each school in the Territory. Tracking the usage of our platforms will inform us of how effective each medium is in transferring much-needed information to all stakeholders.

The Department's fiduciary responsibilities will be streamlined. Under the direction of the Deputy Commissioner, we will institute a cashless system in our schools. Parents will have the opportunity to pay online all student fees, and a possible kiosk will be arranged for services, as well as a one-stop location to pay in cash. All policies and procedures relative to the financial aspect of the Department will be updated and communicated to internal and external stakeholders, where applicable, by the end of 2023. Routine audits will be conducted to ensure compliance with internal controls.

Proper accounting procedures, as well as fiscal transparency and accountability, are at the forefront as we improve the fiscal responsibility of the Department. The goal is to ensure that no funding will be returned to the Federal Government and that the Department comes out of special conditions. This will require monitoring the funds, which has begun, in addition to status updates and regular meetings with the districts around spending. We just attended our Insular Affairs technical assistance meeting and will be submitting our consolidated grant application at the beginning of April. Schools will have their budgeted amounts to implement their school improvement plans.

The VIDE has grant funding balances that must be expended by September 30, 2023. Those balances are listed on Addendum B. Spending plans are forthcoming. Careful monitoring of those balances occurs weekly. Regarding the American Rescue Plan funding, which expires on September 30, 2024, revisions are awaiting approval and will include some big-ticket purchases to ensure those funds are also encumbered timely. Such projects include infrastructure upgrades and professional development initiatives.

IV. Virgin Islands State Literacy Plan

The Virgin Islands State Literacy Plan (VISLP) was developed as an activity aligned to the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant (SRCL). The plan covers Birth – Grade 12, went through several stakeholder reviews and revisions were prepared for a final review at the end of February through the English Language Arts Curriculum Workgroup.

The Virgin Islands State Literacy Plan (VISLP) provides education leaders with research-supported principles, guidelines, and recommendations for implementing best first practices in Tier 1 for effective literacy teaching and learning. The plan also assists education leaders to consider how best to integrate the Kallaloo Cultural Framework into school-based literacy practices to ensure students enrolled in VIDE are prepared for further education, careers, and lifelong learning. The principles, practices, and assessment information are intended to assist leaders in ensuring they can support school leaders to develop school-based processes and practices for literacy teaching and learning that are research-informed and supported.

The State Literacy Plan presents three grade plans:

- a. The Early Years
- b. The Elementary Years
- c. The Adolescent Years

The plan was developed on the premise that for VIDE students to achieve high levels, it is essential for them to be able to comprehend and accurately apply the specific language, vocabulary and writing styles of the subject area they are learning. The VISLP recognizes and highlights the importance of the role of teachers across *all* subject areas in supporting students to develop literacy skills. Every teacher has a role to play in helping students be able to read, write and communicate effectively in English. The Common Core Standards framework encourages educators to develop an “integrated model of literacy” instruction and learning where “instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening and language be a shared responsibility within the school” (2010). This integrated approach to learning and teaching may be described interdisciplinary where all teachers of one school assume some responsibility for the development of students’ literacy skills and collaborate to ensure students develop consistent understanding, strategies and skills in each of the areas for reading, writing and speaking and listening.

The VIDE VISLP takes the interdisciplinary approach one step further by providing teachers of all disciplines with some guidance about how to support the literacy skills of their students (Disciplinary Literacy). Shanahan (2008, 2012) supports VIDE, writing that the development of literacy skills, knowledge and understanding should be a feature of all classrooms where teachers model for students how to read, write and communicate in ways that are applicable for the subject area.

The development of the plan went through several iterations with collaborative support from several entities to include the University of the Virgin Islands School of Education, Region Three

Comprehensive Center (R3CC), McRel International, State and District Office of Curriculum & Instruction, all content area coordinators, special education and bilingual education leads and lead teachers.

The State Literacy Plan is available for review at the #GoOpenUSVI Microsite via the link here: <https://goopenusvi.vide.vi/courseware/lesson/5/overview>. A number of curated collections that support literacy are also available on the site at <https://goopenusvi.vide.vi/curated-collections>. Teachers can also view recordings of professional development on Culturally Relevant Teaching housed on the Microsite at <https://goopenusvi.vide.vi/hubs/cultural#webinar-recordings>.

Next Steps: A rollout and implementation plan is under development. A key component of this plan includes a PowerPoint slide deck that highlights the key areas of the literacy plan with examples of how activities in the School Improvement Plan can be enhanced through the strategies shared in the State Literacy Plan. This slide deck will be used during rollout of the document which will take place in phases before the end of the current school year.

Phase 1: Introduction of the Plan to the Office of the Insular Superintendent (March 28, 2023)

Phase 2: Provide Professional Development and alignment strategies to State Directors and District Coordinators (April 4, 2023)

Phase 3: Introduction and Implementation of Plan with School Administrators (April 11, 2023)

Phase 4: Introduction and Implementation School Success Teams (April 18, 2023)

- Collaborative Success Plans
- Schools

Phase 5: Meet with VI Board of Education to introduce plan upon approval of the Commissioner (May 17, 2023)

Phase 6: The Virgin Islands Community through the Division of Public Relations upon approval of the Commissioner (May 2023 - December 2023)

V. School Safety and Security

The Department takes its responsibility of ensuring safe schools and activity centers very seriously. We firmly realize that to ensure safe and secure environments where teaching and learning can take place, that we must robustly support schools and activity centers in developing a safety culture where all staff exercise care and vigilance in the planning and conduct of all lessons and school activities. To this end, the Department has completed and implemented and/or is planning the following:

- The development, legal review and approval, promulgation and training, implementation, and monitoring of the Virgin Islands School Safety Operating Procedures (VISSOP). This policy

document will provide general direction and guidance on daily school safety operations, defines the roles and responsibilities of school leadership and school security personnel, and outlines the procedures necessary to ensure school safety for all. The VISSOP is near completion by the Department’s State level School Safety Team which is comprised of the Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Director of Disaster Planning and School Safety and the two (2) School Safety Manager (one per district).

The **Guiding Principles** of the VISSOP are as follows:

- To adopt reasonable practical measures to prevent all foreseeable incidents in schools.
- To take a whole-school approach to ensure every individual takes personal responsibility for his/her own safety and the safety of others.
- To build staff capacity in safety-related competencies.
- To work with students and stakeholders (i.e., parents and community) on appropriate safety behavior observed by all.
- To provide safety education as part of the VIDE’s effort in ensuring the safety of students.

The **School Safety Framework** for the VISSOP is described in Table 5 below.

Table 5

| | |
|--|--|
| LEADERSHIP | MOTIVATION |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PLAN AND DEVELOP SCHOOL SAFETY FRAMEWORK AND WORK PLAN ○ PROVIDE VISION, GUIDANCE, AND IMPETUS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROACTIVE TOWARD SAFETY ISSUES ○ UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS TO ADDRESS SAFETY ISSUES |
| SCHOOL CLIMATE | PRACTICES |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ INFUSION OF SAFETY INTO CURRICULUM ○ APPROACH (DEPARTMENT AND SCHOOL WIDE) ○ ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ○ EXPECTED OUTCOMES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SOPS ○ REVIEWS AND EVALUATIONS (THREAT ASSESSMENTS) ○ SIMULATION EXERCISE ○ PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT (PD) |

- The professionalization of school monitors is tantamount to the Department. This simply means that monitors are properly and regularly trained, fit for duty physically and mentally, fully trained and equipped with personal security equipment, and appropriately uniformed attire and recognizable as school security officials.

In furtherance of the professionalizing school monitors, the Department has conducted quarterly professional development sessions since 2021 as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Active Shooter Training</i> ○ <i>All Hazards Awareness Presentation</i> ○ <i>De-escalation Training</i> ○ <i>Introduction to Professional Development for School Monitors</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Effective Use of Handcuffs (by Bureau of Corrections)</i> ○ <i>Understanding and Recognizing Students with Disabilities</i> ○ <i>Scenario-based Training for School Monitors</i> |
|---|---|

The culminating professional development training for school monitors this school year is the first annual **School Monitor Professional Development Retreat** (see Figure 5). The Department is actively collaborating with the Virgin Islands National Guard (VING) and the Virgin Islands Territorial Management Agency (VITEMA) to conduct the retreat. It is tentatively scheduled for **June 5-8, 2023**, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily, for approximately 80-100 school monitors from across the Territory and 10 VIDE senior leaders.

It is our hope and firm prayers that the conduct of professional development training for school monitors, school administrators, teachers, students, etc., results in the Virgin Islands National School Safety Conference in school year 2023-2024.

Figure 5

**SCHOOL SAFETY:
A SHARED
RESPONSIBILITY**

SAVE THE DATE

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

**Virgin Islands
National School
Safety Conference**
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

CONFERENCE GOALS

- To exchange information on best practices in order to better secure schools
- To provide school leaders, educators, staff and external stakeholders guidance for preventing, identifying, mitigating, and responding to school safety concerns
- To ensure that school safety is a cross-functional responsibility and every agency participation drives the success of overall school safety

CONFERENCE THEME

"School Safety: A Shared Responsibility!"

- In our partnership with the honorable Ray Fonseca and the honorable Angel Bolques, we have respectfully requested an appropriation of \$331,220 for school monitor school security equipment identified in Table 6 below.

Table 6

| SCHOOL MONITOR SECURITY EQUIPMENT | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| EQUIPMENT ITEM | COST PER UNIT | TOTAL NEEDED | TOTAL | SHIPPING | TOTAL COST |
| *Body Cameras | \$130.00 | 120 | \$15,600.00 | \$4,000.00 | \$19,600.00 |
| *Body Armor Vests (bullet proof) | \$150.00 | 120 | \$18,000.00 | \$4,000.00 | \$22,000.00 |
| *Handcuffs | \$28.00 | 120 | \$3,360.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$4,360.00 |
| Arm Protectors | \$20.00 | 120 | \$2,400.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$3,400.00 |
| School Monitor Uniforms | \$300.00 | 120 | \$36,000.00 | \$4,000.00 | \$40,000.00 |
| *Retractable Batons | \$42.00 | 120 | \$5,040.00 | \$2,500.00 | \$7,540.00 |
| *Segway Electronic Patrol Vehicles | \$2,500.00 | 20 | \$50,000.00 | \$20,000.0 | \$70,000.00 |
| Emergency Vehicles | \$45,000.00 | 3 | \$135,000.00 | \$8,500.00 | \$143,500.00 |
| *Handheld Metal Detector Wands | \$140.00 | 120 | \$16,800.00 | \$4,000.00 | \$20,800.00 |
| FINAL TOTAL | | | | | \$331,200.00 |
| NOTE(S) | *These items will require training before use | | | | |

Other actions of the Department to address safety and health concerns include the following:

- o Distribution of 175 two-way handheld radios for St. Thomas-St. John District
- o Procurement of 175 replacement two-way handheld radios for St. Croix District
- o Completion of RFP for school security cameras in St. Croix District
- o RFP solicitation for school security cameras for St. Thomas-St. John District
- o PA system vendor installation walk-through February 27-March 3, 2023, in St. Croix District

The Department partners with the following agencies (law enforcement and non-law enforcement) on a regular basis on a plethora of school security issues to include, but not limited to, the Edibles Crisis, Active Threats, Disaster Preparation and Readiness, etc.

- o Virgin Islands Police Department (SROs at secondary level, school violence incidents and emergency response, security coordination for athletic events, Edibles Task Force, school presentations, etc.)
- o Virgin Islands Territorial Management Agency (monthly ESF-6 meetings, monthly EMC meetings, Active Threat Planning/Tabletop Exercises/Drills, Great American Shakeout Earthquake Drill, School Monitor Training, etc.)
- o Office of Gun Violence Prevention (Group Violence Intervention University Training, Advisory Council for the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, school presentations)
- o Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (Edibles Task Force)
- o Bureau of Corrections (School Monitor Training)
- o High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Task Force (Edibles Task Force, school presentations)

- National School Safety Advocacy Council (school monitor and VIDE Leadership attendance at National School Safety Conference 2021 and 2022, consultation and information sharing)
- Virgin Islands Superior Court, Family Court Division (weekly court appearances by selected District officials to provide information and offer testimony as required at juvenile hearings)
- The Department has presented to the Commissioner of Police and other law enforcement stakeholders the idea of an internal VIDE police department that will more greatly support schools to achieve a safer learning environment for student achievement. This can possibly be accomplished by the support of the Governor of the Virgin Islands and legislation in the form of an amendment to 3 V.I.C. §262 to transfer the **functions and responsibilities** of the Bureau of School Security currently within the Virgin Islands Police Department to VIDE. Additionally, such an amendment will need to redefine the Bureau’s responsibility as described herein.

The Bureau within VIDE would provide school security resource officers (commissioned SROs), school investigators, 24-hour accessibility for emergencies, intrusion alarm protection, video cameras in schools, video recovery on school buses, crisis response team training, crisis planning, crime prevention, and positive preventative education. The United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), defines SROs as “*a career law enforcement officer assigned in a community policing capacity to a local educational agency. SROs work in collaboration with schools and community-based organizations to provide a positive and visible law enforcement presence on school campuses.*” SROs have four major roles: Law Enforcement, Informal Counselors, Educator, and Emergency Manager. (https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/SRO_School_Policing_Factsheet.pdf)

A draft proposal, Version 6.0, for “**Keeping Schools Safe: Virgin Islands Department of Education, Bureau of School Security**” is being refined and vetted for consideration by the Governor of the Virgin Islands.

Students in the USVI experienced considerable interruptions in formal education because of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 and the COVID-19 pandemic. To support the development and wellbeing of the whole child, VIDE uses a multi-tiered approach. This is done through community partnerships, contractual support and from our student services staff. The VIDE is fully committed to improving and aligning current structures and resources that support a multi-tiered system of support, continuous school improvement and students’ achievement.

This is why we are working with the National Drop Out Center to create a comprehensive dropout prevention plan that will help to guide the district in systematic planning and monitoring of current and future actions to reduce the dropout rate by specifically addressing disruptive behavior. To fully address the needs of the whole child and to ensure that the child thrives in a social world, the Division of Student Services adopted the American School Counselors’ Association’s three-tier approach to social emotional development that have an impact on student growth in three domain areas: academic, career and social/emotional development.

Under our Tiered System of support, we aim to support the needs of all children.

VI. Human Resources Updates

During the 2022-2023 school year, VIDE maintained a staffing level of Two thousand Two hundred and thirty (2,230) employees; Two thousand and twenty-eight (2,028) are classified positions and two hundred and two (202) Exempt positions. As of March 2023, the Department has a total of One Hundred and eighty-seven (187) vacancies, 65 in the St. Thomas/St. John District and 122 in the St. Croix district. Of the 65 in St. Thomas district 13 are teaching vacancies and of the 122 in St. Croix, 30 are teaching vacancies. As of August 31, 2022, to March 13, 2023, 75 employees have separated from the department of which Thirty-Three (33) were teachers.

Table 7

| Employee Count | | as of 3/13/2023 | |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Class | STTJ | STX | Grand Total |
| Administrators | 54 | 59 | 113 |
| Counselors | 22 | 31 | 53 |
| JROTC Teachers | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| Librarian | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| Nurses | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| Other Support Staff | 445 | 419 | 864 |
| Para-professionals | 118 | 153 | 271 |
| Teachers | 435 | 453 | 888 |
| Grand Total | 1096 | 1134 | 2230 |

Table 8

| Eligible to Retire | Eligible on 5/26/2023 | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Class | Eligible | Not Eligible | Grand Total |
| Administrators | 43 | 70 | 113 |
| Counselors | 11 | 42 | 53 |
| JROTC Teachers | 4 | 7 | 11 |
| Librarian | 5 | 10 | 15 |
| Nurses | 6 | 9 | 15 |
| Other Support Staff | 100 | 764 | 864 |
| Paraprofessionals | 34 | 237 | 271 |
| Teachers | 127 | 761 | 888 |
| Grand Total | 330 | 1900 | 2230 |

Table 9

| Separations | 8/31/2022 to 3/13/2023 | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Row Labels | Resigned | Retiring | Grand Total |
| STTJ | | | |
| Administrators | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Other Support Staff | 12 | 8 | 20 |
| Paraprofessionals | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Teachers | 10 | 5 | 15 |
| STX | | | |
| Librarian | | 1 | 1 |
| Other Support Staff | 11 | 5 | 16 |
| Paraprofessionals | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Teachers | 3 | 15 | 18 |
| Grand Total | 38 | 37 | 75 |

Schools nationwide need help filling vacancies due to high turnover, attrition, and other factors. These factors, along with lower numbers of college graduates entering the teaching profession, have continued to make it challenging to recruit. The United States Virgin Islands (USVI) has not been exempted from this national epidemic. The department continues to recruit continuously throughout the year. The Human Resources office has received over ten letters from teachers scheduled to retire at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. Twenty-Seven (27) international teachers from the J1 exchange program are scheduled to return to their home country at the end of the 2022-2023 school year (see Table 10). The department has started its recruitment efforts locally and Nationally for the 2023-2024 school year through Social Media platforms, the GVI NeoGov recruitment system, and by attending job fairs held by the University of the Virgin Islands. We are using our social media platforms as well to recruit. VIDE will utilize the distance learning contract to recruit teachers to fill some vacancies virtually. We will also use federal funding to offer opportunities to grow our own which are programs in existence as we speak. We are also looking at increasing our tracks in our high schools to include an education track.

Table 10

| International (J1) Teachers Leaving on 6/30/2023 | |
|--|-------------|
| Island | Grand Total |
| STTJ | 26 |
| STX | 1 |
| Grand Total | 27 |

| Breakdown | |
|--|-----------|
| STTJ | |
| DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | 2 |
| Foreign Language Teacher Education | 2 |
| | |
| GUYANA | 4 |
| Elementary Education and Teaching | 1 |
| Mathematics Teacher Education | 1 |
| Social Science Teacher Education | 1 |
| Vocational High School and Secondary Business/Vocational-Industrial/Occupational Diploma Program | 1 |
| JAMAICA | 3 |
| Business and Innovation/Entrepreneurship Teacher Education | 1 |
| Social Studies Teacher Education | 1 |
| Special Education and Teaching, General | 1 |
| PHILIPPINES | 17 |
| Mathematics Teacher Education | 6 |
| Physical Education Teaching and Coaching | 2 |
| Science Teacher Education/General Science Teacher Education | 1 |
| Special Education and Teaching, General | 6 |
| Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language/ESL Language Instructor | 2 |
| STX | |
| GUYANA | 1 |
| Vocational High School and Secondary Business/Vocational-Industrial/Occupational Diploma Program | 1 |
| Grand Total | 27 |

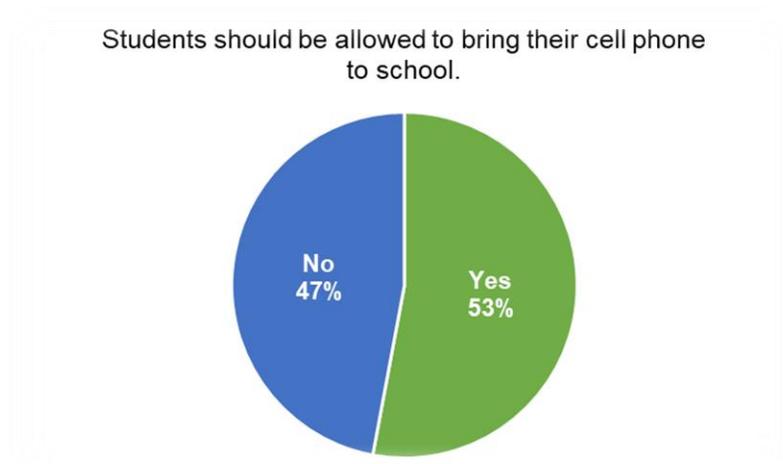
The department is currently in compliance with the American Federation of Teachers union (AFT), Educators Administrators Administration (EAA), and United Steel Workers union (USW) agreements. The Human Resources office has processed over Two Thousand, Nine Hundred six (2,906) salary Increase NOPAs for AFT members for September 01, 2020, to September 01, 2022. Two hundred and seventy-five (275) Salary Increase NOPAs were processed for EAA members for October 01, 2020, to October 01, 2022, and Ninety-Seven (97) NOPAs were processed for School Monitors (USW).

VII. Cell phones in Schools

Should students be allowed to have their cell phones at school? A March 7, 2023 **Cell Phones in Schools Survey** sent to all school Principals territory-wide found that 53% of the principals believe that students should be allowed to bring their cell phones to school (see Figure 6). It is

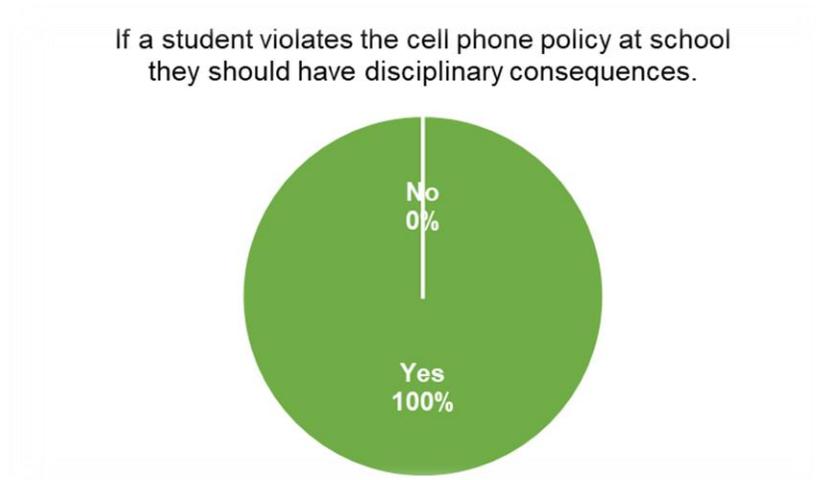
important to note that the survey has not yet been completed by all principals hence the data may change.

Figure 6



The survey also found that 100% of Principals believe that if a student violates the cell phone policy at school, they should have disciplinary consequences (see Figure 7).

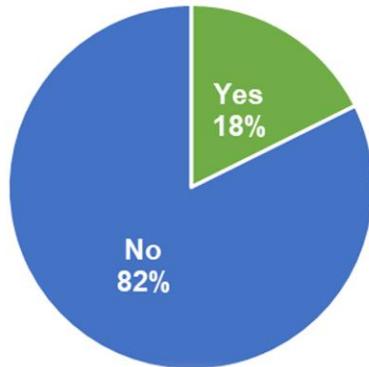
Figure 7



Further, the survey found that 82% of Principals believe that students should not have the right to communicate with their parents or guardian on their cell phones during school hours (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

I believe that students should have the right to communicate with their parent/guardian on their cell phone during school hours.



Principals also shared additional thoughts regarding cell phone usage during the school day. Table 11 provides a listing of the thoughts shared.

Table 11

“Cell phones are ringing in classrooms during instruction, students are sneaking onto social media in the restrooms and elsewhere on campus, returning the phone to parent as soon as it is taken is pointless”.

“Cell Phone usage has created a number of unforeseen problems on campus. Students take inappropriate pictures of each other, and pictures of their genitals in school bathroom stalls, they call parents and friends during classes and videotape fights; they cyberbully and use pictures from/in their phones to ridicule others. Cell phones have no place in schools where students are concerned!”

“I understand that technology is necessary but students are not using the phone responsibly.”

“Use of phones should be used for emergencies (en route to and from schools). They are not needed during school hours, especially at the elementary level. There are phones in the office for emergency use during school hours”.

“I am extremely bothered by the information that is shared with parents and others during the school day before the administration has had a chance to deal with or mitigate the situation. Our students are not mature enough to have access to this mode of communication”.

“Cell phones should be put away and allowed to use in emergency cases. It is difficult to monitor during non-instructional hours. The phones should be kept in a secure area during the school day”.

“Cell phones should be placed in a secure area during instructional hours. They are policies already in place across the United States that can be easily implemented to curb the escalating crisis in our schools”.

“There is no need for student to have cell on campus. They’re are working phones in the office to contact parents if needed”.

"Unfortunately, I have experienced more of the "cons" to have students utilize cell phones than the "pros". Cell phones have become their ventilators and they cannot function without them. Students are accessing sites that should be accessed, screen-clipping explicit content and air-dropping it, recording sexual content of themselves and others (when shared, they are sharing Child pornography), taking pictures in their uniforms during school hours, and posting, calling outsiders when they have an issue (most times the school doesn't know about) and parents speed on in anger, they sneak pictures of Educators and students and post nasty captions and descriptions, they are stolen and/or misplaced, parents and struggling students demand we stop what we are doing and find it for them, etc. All the negative cell phone usage is damaging the schools and the "Face of Education." The cell phone in the hands of immature students is causing more damage than good!"

"The utilization of the cell phone during the school day is a distraction, and it's a major source of most of the issues we are experiencing on campus".

"Rules and regulations will always be violated by a few; hence, penalties must be specific and targeted to the violators while sending a strong message to the would-be future violator. For example: Although gun murder is illegal, people still commit crimes using guns. It is not that a gun is a terrible tool. It is inappropriate usage".

"I do not take issue with students using their cell phones with supervised use and granted permission. It should be made clear, though, to parents and others that cell phone use during school hours is reserved for urgent calls, and academic instruction, not frivolous use".

"Cell phone usage in classes that require research or participation in games such as Kahoot has its pace on a school campus. I believe that since it is a fact that cell phones are going to continue to be brought unto school campuses, so they should be utilized to assist with instruction and class participation".

"Due to our location and the unreliable internet service students at times use their hotspot to get internet service to complete their assignments. Additionally, for many of the classes, the Social Studies materials are solely on the internet".

"Students should be allowed to use cell phones before, during lunch in contained areas, and after school. Classroom uses will be supervised".

"The face of instruction has changed dramatically since the pandemic; teachers utilize technology more in their lessons. As a result, a teacher would often ask students to access something that they posted on Teams or use Kahoot and other interactive platforms. The flip side to that is, some teachers have not established a cell phone policy in their classrooms and therefore, some students can be seen using cell phones in classes to do other things without fear of repercussion. My biggest concern is the use of cell phones outside of the classrooms. The constant use of the cell phone throughout the day is concerning. Students are constantly on their phones. They record fights, call parents to come to the school before the school can make contact, and they also spend a lot of time talking about who knows. That is very concerning".

This topic can be considered very controversial, but in the wake of the increased threats to campuses through cell phones, it requires a collective approach to the cell phone policy. While in Washington, DC, I had the privilege of visiting Benjamin Banneker High School, built by the same contractors building the new Arthur Richards preK-8 school. While there, I observed students walking onto campus and noticed that they were going immediately to small lockers at the entrance (see Figure 9). When I inquired, they were cell phone lockers.

In speaking to the principal, she indicated the process was necessary because cell phones had become such a distraction for the students. They adopted and functioned normally without them.

Figure 9



VIII. Bi-lingual Education

The State Office of Bilingual Education has developed an English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Empowerment Hub that provides Administrators, teachers, parents, and all stakeholders with all aspects of the Bilingual/ESOL program. You will find the vision, goals, and programs we use to support English learners. The site also keeps everyone up-to-date with what is happening in the United States Department of Education. Weekly announcements are shared about the great things happening in our ESOL program. Act 8555, VIDE's ESOL Policy and Procedures Manual, Dear Colleague Letter, and English Learner Toolkit are also available for reading. Webinars and PowerPoint presentations are uploaded to provide support. The webinars were created in collaboration with the Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands (REL NEI). It's a series of four webinars focused on strategies to implement high-quality instructional practices for English learners in the content area classroom. Administrators, teachers, and visitors can access many resources for reading or instruction.

The Office of Bilingual Education has been working on an English learner tracking tool that will allow us to see how many students are being considered for further screening. This was added to VIDE's State Office Data Dashboard. We will continue to build this data dashboard as needed.

The Office of Bilingual Education has provided support to schools in the development of their school improvement plan. It has and continues to provide professional development to ESOL teachers and content area teachers working with English learners using the Language Approach, Free Digital Tools from Microsoft for translation, Best Practices, and #GoOpenUSVI, to mention a few. School visits and presentations are ongoing for both school districts.

The ACCESS is a summative English language proficiency assessment. ACCESS is taken annually by English learners in kindergarten through grade 12 in WIDA Consortium member states. ACCESS helps school districts monitor the English language development of students identified as English language learners. ACCESS for ELLs measures students' abilities to understand and produce English used within school settings. The four test sections are Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. We have supported ESOL teachers during ACCESS testing.

We have provided ESOL teachers with culturally relevant books to support their diverse student population. We are working on providing English learners with an online program that will immerse them and provide relevant and scaffolded instruction.

We meet monthly with ESOL coordinators from both school districts through Teams to evaluate the program priorities and needs. With the assistance of the ESOL coordinators, we are developing a parent survey to allow parents to voice their opinions and needs.

We provided administrators from both school districts with an update on ACT 8555, which is an Act amending Title 17 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 5, section 41a relating to bilingual education and the new ESOL Policy and Procedures Manual, which is an updated technical assistance manual that provides administrators, teachers and ESOL coordinators a system of identification, assessment, placement, and reclassification procedures for English learners.

We are working across all departments to make sure English learners are included. For example; for STEAM, Dr. Williams and Dr. Camacho provide schools with PDs and activities that will allow English learners the scaffolds they need to succeed. The division of Cultural Education works alongside the Office of Bilingual Education to ensure that the activities include the diverse cultures represented in our schools. The State Office of Curriculum and Instruction works hand in hand with the State Office of Bilingual Education. The textbook adoptions were with the input of all stakeholders, including this office. For example, the literacy plan was developed considering all subgroups and with everyone's input. These are just a few of the collaborations.

We are developing a series of 20-minute videos to support ESOL teachers and content area teachers on policy and procedures and strategies for working with English learners. We also plan on providing self-paced professional E-Learning courses for administrators and content area teachers next school year. We work closely with the WIDA Consortium at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research. The WIDA Consortium is dedicated to researching, designing, and implementing a high-quality, culturally, and linguistically appropriate system to support multilingual learners in K-12 contexts. This office also works closely with the Regional

Educational Laboratories (RELs), which have collaborated with school districts, state departments of education, and other education stakeholders to help generate and apply evidence to improve learner outcomes. This office will continue to work for the English learners and their families, providing as much support as needed and ensuring they succeed. Many more projects are in store for our English learners and their families.

IX. Summer Maintenance

VIDE Operations through the Facilities and Maintenance Division continues to maintain and rehabilitate VIDE's existing aged facilities. This is accomplished by utilizing maintenance staff and our service contractors to ensure a safe, sanitary, and healthy environment for everyone using our facilities.

Summer maintenance in both school districts is underway with the preparation of bid packages (**See Addendum C**). Listed below are the types of maintenance services to be completed by service contractors:

1. Landscaping
2. AC Repairs / Servicing
 - a. Clean units and filter
 - b. Repair or replace nonfunctional units as needed
3. Plumbing
 - a. Emergency repairs (broken pipes, clogged toilets, broken sewage lines etc.)
 - b. Replace toilets, sinks & fixtures as needed
 - c. Pump and clean kitchen grease traps as needed
4. Electrical
 - a. Replace bulbs, ballast, receptacles & light fixtures as needed
5. Roof Leaks & Repairs
6. Pest Control
7. Air Quality Testing & Remediation
8. General Maintenance
 - a. Replace ceiling tiles & floor tiles as needed
 - b. Replace interior and exterior doors as needed
 - c. Painting of facilities
 - d. Repair screens (ac & wire mesh for mosquitos) as needed

VIDE secured the services of an electrical consulting firm to perform Comprehensive Electrical Assessments of the territory's schools. Scopes of work identified in each facility assessment requiring immediate action will be submitted for bid and completion during the 2023 summer break. The procurement and Installation of emergency generators are scheduled to be also completed. This will aid VIDE in fulfilling our territorial emergency operations role.

The St. Croix District has recently been experiencing low water pressure, which affected numerous schools. This necessitated the recommissioning of previously closed cisterns and pump rooms to ensure continued operation. Supplemental water supply was provided with temporary water tank installations, and pumps were needed. Maintenance staff worked diligently to complete necessary repairs and pump installations, including replacing a major pump at the St. Croix Educational Complex.

Two of our most pressing issues in both districts are air quality and air conditioners (A/C). Air quality in our schools' modulars and aging buildings is an ongoing issue that affects students and staff. The maintenance divisions are continuing to secure testing and remediation of affected areas. Maintaining existing A/C systems is performed year-round, along with replacing inoperable units. New units are also installed during the school year, with larger units scheduled to be installed after hours or during breaks.

X. Update on Bills

Act 8193: Public Finance Authority

Money unspent will be reprogrammed to the major maintenance category to allow for more flexibility within the maintenance division to assist with maintenance projects. Recommended adjustments have been submitted to the Governor for submittal to this body. Some existing projects include Central High Library, PA systems for Central, Complex and Juanita Gardine. In St. Thomas PA system for Gomez and CAHS.

Act 8270: Early Childhood Education Certification

All Pre-K through 6th-grade teachers have been assessed, and individuals required to pursue their certification have been identified. Additionally, teachers have been informed of the following:

- Act 8270;
- Pathways/options the Virgin Islands Board of Education (VIBOE) provides to attain ECE certification; and
- Resources VIDE has made available to assist.

The options set by the VIBOE are:

Option 1: The deadline was extended to September 2023. Teachers must be certified in Elementary Education and have five or more years of teaching at the primary level. Eligible teachers must complete 30 Professional Development (PD) hours in ECE-related areas.

Option 2: The deadline is August 2024. Eligible teachers must complete 90 PD hours or take three courses. They must also take the ECE Praxis II.

The goal is to have teachers eligible for option 1 complete the 30 hours of PD and apply for certification to the VIBOE by May 2023. VIDE has a purchase order with VIBE solely to pay for application fees. The list of names has been submitted to VIBOE. The expectation is for teachers to start applying. Some teachers have either applied or are getting ready to apply. VIDE is

currently working with the Educational Testing Service (ETS), UVI CELL, and VIDE personnel to determine the best avenue to have option 2 teachers take the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Praxis II exam.

Based on the options set by the VIBE, teachers who started with VIDE in the 2022-2023 school year need 15 credits in specified ECE courses and must take the ECE Praxis II. Scope of Services was requested and received from the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) and forwarded for procuring.

It is essential to mention that certification provides professional and public assurance that teachers have met teaching standards and have demonstrated their readiness to teach and improve student learning. VIDE believes all teachers should be responsible and “professionally ready” for student learning. Hence, we are ready and able to assist teachers with attaining set requirements.

Act 7587: Bullying Prevention

The VIDE will work as a territory to draft a plan of action around bullying. We recognize that this has been an issue that continues to plague our schools and students. The recent surge in social media usage has increased cyber bullying as well. The department will utilize the board's policy around bullying and create a territory wide approach to how it will be handled. We definitely need consistency in how things are addressed in the department. We are also standardizing our discipline policy to include wrap around services for our students who commit level 3 and 4 infractions.

Act 8434: Gun Registration Fees

Budgets have been prepared by the CTE programs and uploaded on the system to allow for spending of the funds. The CTE programs have immediate needs that this funding will assist in procuring as well additional funding sources.

XI. Closing

In closing I want to thank the Committee on Education and Workforce Development for this opportunity for us to present updates on the status of public education in the territory. We are looking forward to our commitment to work collaboratively as we work to improve the educational opportunities for our students. We stand ready to engage in meaningful conversations with you as we answer questions and provide clarity to the community.

Addendum A

Data Presentation Memorandum

Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D.
Commissioner

GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION



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January 13, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: All School Principals

FROM: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Commissioner 
Virgin Islands Department of Education

SUBJECT: DATA PRESENTATION FOR COMMISSIONER AND STATE LEVEL CABINET

On behalf of the entire State Cabinet, I want to express my sincere commendations for the student-centered work that each of you have been leading in your respective positions. Since my appointment as Interim Commissioner to present, we joined efforts at the foundation of all that we do, improving the education for our children. Understanding that education is the genius of our Democracy, we have a moral imperative to do everything within our power to close the achievement gaps that currently exist: one student at a time, one classroom at a time, one school at a time. Let's do this! Teamwork will make this dream work for all of us, USVI students will achieve!

Lee Bolamn once said, "A vision without a strategy remains an illusion." In an effort to approach the Multi-Tiered Support of our schools with strategy and purpose, each school principal will be scheduled for an individual meeting with the State Cabinet to present the "state of the union" at each site. Furthermore, to identify the actions required to move the achievement levels at each site. Below you will find the steps that each school should follow to prepare for this presentation. Please note that at this presentation, each school principal should be completely transparent with the information that projects the current "state of the union" at their site. School principals should not hold back on the important information that has to be spoken due to the positions of any of the members around the table. A very important part of this session is for state leaders to gather current data to help schools in the entire territory to improve student achievement.

1. Each school will prepare a PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint presentation should cover the following topics through your individual personality, creativity, and school identity. Each school principal will have one hour to present their information with his/her leadership spin. Additionally, principals may invite two team members to attend the presentation.

Transforming Today's Learners Into Tomorrow's Leaders

NAME OF SCHOOL
**School Site Data
Presentation**

Principal Name
Date



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Addendum B

Federal Grants Balances

As of 03/19/23
Expiring 09/30/23

| Grant | Budget | Expenditures | Encumbrances | Pre-Encumbrances | Balance to Spend | Personnel | Operating | Indirect Costs |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| FY 2020 Consolidated Grant (CGA) | \$ 15,676,155.59 | \$ 10,117,477.91 | \$ 1,509,612.11 | \$ 545,963.42 | \$ 3,503,102.15 | \$ 2,136,032.27 | \$ 1,051,029.24 | \$ 315,537.46 |
| FY 2021 Consolidated Grant (CGA) | \$ 16,299,814.00 | \$ 7,311,097.95 | \$ 1,784,265.57 | \$ 100,639.84 | \$ 7,103,810.64 | \$ 3,680,515.97 | \$ 2,858,806.50 | \$ 527,471.48 |
| FY 2021 Education Stabilization Fund (CARES II) | \$ 53,234,881.00 | \$ 24,012,816.77 | \$ 4,253,928.70 | \$ 1,208,652.59 | \$ 23,759,482.94 | \$ 8,675,562.05 | \$ 13,326,309.65 | \$ 1,757,611.24 |
| FY 2021 Adult Education (AE) | \$ 590,188.00 | \$ 336,425.65 | \$ 241,001.98 | \$ - | \$ 12,760.37 | \$ 5,887.72 | \$ 6,539.64 | \$ 333.01 |
| FY 2021 Special Education (IDEA) | \$ 8,798,265.00 | \$ 7,135,627.09 | \$ 300,235.68 | \$ 618,433.04 | \$ 743,969.19 | \$ 287,869.78 | \$ 342,285.95 | \$ 113,813.46 |
| FY 2021 Special Education (IDEA ARP) | \$ 1,756,253.00 | \$ 401,529.26 | \$ 679,244.64 | \$ 374,475.00 | \$ 301,004.10 | \$ - | \$ 220,960.52 | \$ 80,043.58 |
| FY 2021 Striving Readers | \$ 156,038.00 | \$ 85,635.20 | \$ 63,900.00 | \$ 1,806.00 | \$ 4,696.80 | \$ - | \$ 276.00 | \$ 4,420.80 |
| | \$ 96,511,594.59 | \$ 49,400,609.83 | \$ 8,832,188.68 | \$ 2,849,969.89 | \$ 35,428,826.19 | \$ 14,785,867.79 | \$ 17,806,207.50 | \$ 2,799,231.03 |

Addendum C

Summer Maintenance Listing

| STTJ District - General Maintenance Funds Summer Maintenance '23 | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------|---|-----------------|
| # | Facility | Contrator | Scope of Work | Status |
| 1 | Joseph Gomez, ES | To be selected | Renovate unused building to SPED classroom. Renovations too include but not limited to plumbing fixture rplacement, interior painting, commercial vinyl floor finish and intallation of window screens. | Bid preparation |
| 2 | Edith Williams Alternative Academy | To be selected | Roof repairs to multiple buildings. Interior and exterior painting including doors and louvered windows. Renovation of Building 1 flooring and railings. Repair perimeter fencing. | Bid preparation |
| 3 | Yvonne E. Milliner-Bowskey , ES | To be selected | Prep and repaint deck with anti-slip paint. Refinish and repaint railings. Repair/ refinish 14 modular building roofs and floors. Repair modular building roll-up shutters. Remove and replace damaged and missing modular building skirts. Repair chain link fencing and gate entrances. patch asphalt driveway. | Bid preparation |
| 4 | Ulla Muller, ES | To be selected | Remove and repalce existing damaged roof sheathing from back section of Building 2 and and eave soffit. Paint roof of Building 1, 2 & 3. Remove and replace damaged guttering and downspouts from Building 1, 2 & 3. Remove four stairways with metal handrails from Trailer T1, T2, T3 & T4, replace with new concrete stairs and metal railing. Remove and replace flush valves. Remove and repalce non functional urinals. | Bid preparation |
| 5 | Lockhart Elementary ES | To be selected | Prep and repaint decks of school campus with Anti Slip coating. Prep and repaint railings. Repair/ refinish 24 modular building roofs and floors. Repair modular building roll-up shutters. | Bid preparation |
| 6 | Addelita Cancryn | To be selected | Prep and repaint decks of school campus with Anti Slip coating. Prep and repaint railings. Repair/ refinish 16 modular building roofs and floors. Repair modular building roll-up shutters. Remove existing hallway and corridor lights and replace with new LED lights. Prep and recoat library roof including sealing around A/C units. | Bid preparation |

STX District - General Maintenance Funds Summer Maintenance '23

| # | Facility | Contrator | Scope of Work | Status |
|----|-----------------------|------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Ricardo Richards | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. Repair and seal roofs. Replace ceiling tiles as required. Demolish and remove non functional modular buildings. | Bid preparation |
| 2 | Alfredo Andrews ES | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. Recoat roofs with elastomeric coating. Replace flourescent light bulbs as required. Remove and replace exterior doors. | Bid preparation |
| 3 | Claude O. Marko ES | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Remove and repallce non funtional window operators. Remove and replace termite infested wooden cabinets (upon completion of termite treatment). | Bid preparation |
| 4 | Juanita Gardine ES | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. | Bid preparation |
| 5 | John H. Woodson Jr. H | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. Replace non funtional lights in hallways. Install campus security lighting. | Bid preparation |
| 6 | Pearl B. Larsen ES | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. Recoat roofs with elastomeric coating. Replace exerior doors. | Bid preparation |
| 7 | Eulalie Rivera ES | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. Replace cafeteria doors. Remove classroom shutters and install A/C units. Repair retaining wall on West side of campus. | Bid preparation |
| 8 | Central High School | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. Replace ceiling tiles as required. Remove and repalce non operable window operators. Repair retaining wall on West side of campus. Inspect and repair cafeteria roof. Prune trees in courtyard. | Bid preparation |
| 9 | SCEC | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate locker rooms and restrooms. Replace ceiling tiles as required. Remove and repalce non operable window operators. | Bid preparation |
| 10 | Lew Muckle ES | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. Remove and replace railings as required. | Bid preparation |
| 11 | CTEC | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. Replace ceiling tiles as required. | Bid preparation |
| 12 | Adult Education | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Renovate all restrooms. Replace ceiling tiles as required. Replace damaged doors and frames as required. | Bid preparation |
| 13 | Alternative Education | To be determined | Interior and exterior painting as required. Replace ceiling tiles as required. Replace perimeter fence as required. | Bid preparation |