



36th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands

The Honorable
KURT A. VIALET
Majority Leader

Gloryvee Christian-Krieger
Chief of Staff

Samanta Prentice
Legislative Researcher

Janella John
Communications Manager

COMMITTEE CHAIR
Education and Workforce
Development

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Health, Hospitals &
Human Services


Disaster Recovery,
Infrastructure & Planning

Housing, Transportation,
& Telecommunications

Budget, Appropriations and
Finance

Memorandum

TO: Mrs. Kurell A. Sheridan, JD
Executive Director
36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

FROM: The Honorable Kurt A. Vialet 
Chairman, Committee on Education & Workforce Development

DATE: February 7, 2025

RE: Committee Report for Wednesday, February 5, 2025 Meeting

Please find attached the report for the Committee on Education and Workforce Development (EWD) meeting held on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, in the Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room, St. Croix.

cc: All Senators
Chief Legal Counsel
Archive Division
Journal Division

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FEBRUARY 5, 2025 - COMMITTEE HEARING REPORT

The Committee on Education and Workforce Development convened its hearing on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, in the Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room, St. Croix.

Call to order:

Chairman, Senator Kurt A. Vialet called the meeting to order at **9:12 a.m.**

Committee Members Present:

Senator Kurt A. Vialet
Senator Avery L. Lewis
Senator Kenneth L. Gittens
Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff
Senator Franklin D. Johnson
Senator Marise C. James
Senator Carla J. Joseph

Non-Committee Members Present:

Senator Hubert L. Fredericks
Senator Clifford Joseph, Sr.
Senator Marvin Blyden
Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
Senator Milton Potter
Senator Alma Francis Heyliger

Committee Staff:

Gloryvee Christian-Krieger, Chief of Staff
Samanta Prentice, Legislative Researcher

Protocol officer:

Myrna De-Altier-Pickard

Clerk/Timekeeper:

Janella John, Communications Manager

Legal Counsel:

Not Assigned

Sergeant-At-Arms:

Walton Jack, Jr.

Legislative Reporters:

Part I - Joanne Samuel
Part II - Nataya Munoz
Part III - Nadine Williams
Part IV - Tricia D. Sealey
Part V - Vashti Gerald-Berry

Public Affairs/ Media:

Eustace Brown
Alwyn Baptiste, Jr.
Melissa Gustave
Bernard Matthew, Sr.
Diana Cruz
Chaunte Herbert
Alvin Burke
Omari Hicks
Kashief Hamilton

The committee received testimonies.

BLOCK I – VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Invited Testifier: Honorable Dionne Wells-Hedrington, EdD, Commission

Commissioner Wells-Hedrington provided insights regarding the status of federal funds, including ARPA, the CARES Act, Consolidated Grants, and Imprest Funds. The Commissioner presented an analysis of student test scores for the 2023-2024 academic year, highlighting an upward trend in English Language Arts (ELA) and Science over the past two academic years. However, math proficiency remains an area of concern.

Key statistics included:

- **Math proficiency:** 23.5% of students achieved grade-level proficiency, an increase from 13.1% in earlier years.
- **Students exceeding the standard:** 6.1% compared to 4.0% in the prior year.

The meeting also covered strategies that were implemented to address learning loss, entrance and exit exams, mitigation plans for instructional time lost due to severe heat, and updates on afterschool and summer programs.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Require summer enrichment for students performing two grades or more below grade level.
- Improve student retention guidelines
- Develop strategies to enhance participation in Parent University, focusing on parents who would benefit the most
- Implement attendance counselors at the elementary level
- Provide specialized training for teachers and paraprofessionals working with special needs students
- Include special education materials and equipment in grant requests.
- Develop a contingency plan for the dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education
- Support students who are U.S. Citizens with deported parents
- Implement Act 8506 to establish school-based emergency medical services Act 8801 to hire a school nurse supervisor per district and school health technicians for every public school in the Territory

COMMITTEE REQUESTS:

- Report on liquidated damages and breach of contract
- Outline the process for contracting services from the school level to the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance
- Plans to hire science teachers implement Proximity contract supplement
- List per district of schools that are English as a Second Language (ESL) and Special Education sites
- Breakdown of test scores by subgroups (ex: English speaking vs ESL students)
- Security guard contract and school assignments
- Device distribution per school
- Status of T-Mobile's Project 10Million

- ARPA funds allocation funding details
 - Classroom-specific consolidated funds details
 - List of contracted services, vendors, amounts, and expiration dates
 - EDA company contributions to the Department
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BLOCK II – BUREAU OF SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE

Invited Testifier: Craig Benjamin, Executive Director

Executive Director, Craig Benjamin provided updates on school maintenance and infrastructure, including:

- Progress on the Arthur A. Richards School rebuild and Claude O. Markoe Gymnasium
- School kitchen equipment installation in the St. Croix district
- Electrical upgrades for territorial schools.
- Installation of AC units in heat-affected schools
- Summer maintenance plans
- School-based maintenance reporting process

Additionally, mold remediation efforts at John H. Woodson School were discussed. Mold testing is scheduled to take place following reports of mold-like odors in classrooms. On January 30th, mold remediation and deep cleaning were executed in the affected areas. Additional deep cleaning will be implemented biannually for all schools.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop a stakeholder-accessible project tracking dashboard
- Hire additional HVAC personnel for school facilities.
- Document project progress with before-and-after images
- Review warranty on non-functioning equipment
- Request an increase on imprest account
- Assign a groundskeeper to each school under the principal's supervision

COMMITTEE REQUESTS:

- Deadlines for ARPA Funding Projects
 - Detailed report on the Crosswalk Initiative
 - Updates on CTEC repairs
 - Revised electrical upgrades plans
 - Cost breakdown of ongoing projects
 - Location confirmation of two zero-turn mowers purchased for the St. Croix Educational Complex and Central High Schools
 - Status on Alexander Henderson School
 - Comprehensive list of modifications to the Arthur A. Richards school rebuild completion percentage
 - Liquidated damage clauses for new school contracts
 - Updates on CTEC repairs provided by Custom Builders
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Adjournment:

*Chairman, Senator Kurt A. Violet adjourned the Committee on Education and Workforce Development hearing at **4:52 p.m.***