

VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION
BUDGET PRESENTATION
JULY 22, 2011
Earle B. Ottley Chambers
St. Thomas, USVI
3:00 p.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

Winona A. Hendricks, Chairperson, 16th Board of Education

Good afternoon, Senator Carlton "Ital" Dowe and other members of the Committee on Finance, all other members of the 29th Legislature, the staff of the 29th Legislature, and all those in the viewing and listening audience. My name is Winona A. Hendricks, chairperson of the 16th-elected Virgin Islands Board of Education. The nine-member Board consists of the vice-chair, Keith Richards, from the St. Thomas/St. John District who is here with me today and the secretary, Oswin Sewer, Sr., who is the at large member who hails from St. John; additionally, from St. Croix, we have three other members: Janis A. Esannason, Cheryl V. Francis, Terrence T. Joseph. From St. Thomas, we have three other members: Attorney Judy M. Gomez, Attorney Debra Smith-Watlington, and Arah C. Lockhart. Present with me this morning, along with Vice-chair Keith Richards, are Carol Henneman, the Board's Executive Director, Stephanie J. Berry, the Associate Executive Director and Laurie Isaac, the Director of Business and Finance.

It is my honor today to present the 2012 budget of approximately 2.7 million dollars, which is \$161, 777 less than last year's budget. This budget will conservatively support all the activities of the 16th Board and will support all the educational initiatives

of the community. We continue to reflect the Board's vision which is "***to ensure that each child is provided with the best quality education that promotes our history and culture, guarantees academic achievement and builds strong communities.***"

This year's budget presents challenges for the Board because we are forced to impose an 8% pay cut on our 16 employees. The Board is requesting that the Legislature add an additional \$104,739.00 to bring the Personal Services and Fringe Benefits Category to the 8% cut. The breakdown of our 2012 budget is as follows:

Categories	2012 Board's Request	2012 OMB/Governor's Recommendations	8% Reduction in Personal Cost	2012 Board's Request
Personal Services	846,299.00	733,049.00	55,866.00	788,915.00
Fringe Benefits	307,781.00	244,566.00	48,873.00	293,439.00
Supplies	40,000.00	40,000.00		40,000.00
Other Services and Charges				
Professional Services	142,445.00	142,445.00		142,445.00
Communications	47,000.00	47,000.00		47,000.00
Travel	114,000.00	114,000.00		114,000.00
Transp. Not Travel	4,000.00	4,000.00		4,000.00
Advertising & Promotion	6,000.00	6,000.00		6,000.00
Printing & Binding	500.00	500.00		500.00
Insurance	7,400.00	7,400.00		7,400.00
Repairs & Maintenance	25,000.00	30,090.00		30,090.00
Rental	165,942.00	165,942.00		165,942.00
Training	10,000.00	10,000.00		10,000.00
Other Services/Charges (VI History)	33,898.00	39,496.00		39,496.00
Utilities	45,000.00	45,000.00		50,000.00
Capital Outlay	21,000.00	25,000.00		25,000.00
Special Legislative and Scholarship	1,080,834.00	1,080,834.00		1,080,834.00
TOTAL BUDGET	2,897,099.00	2,735,322.00	104,739.00	2,845,061.00

Additionally, because of the high cost of electricity, we are requesting an additional \$5,000 in that category to offset the increased cost. Our success in promoting our Territorial Scholarship and Loan Program is evident by the 1, 235 applications received this year – a marked increase over last year. However, this means that our limited funds have to be spread farther, and students do not receive the kinds of monies now needed to support a college education. Thanks to the University of the Virgin Islands, through its VI Access Grant Program, we were able to offer \$5,000 grants to 100 students in each district for a total of 200 grants. This helped the Board to offer more grants in a very meaningful way. The Board also wishes to thank you, Senator Dowe, and your colleagues for providing the \$500,000 for nursing grants. All of these grants were awarded, and students have already begun to receive the monies.

This year, the Board has received \$3,053,527 for distribution – which is currently occurring at this time. While we appreciate all the effort made to address nursing shortages in the Territory, we would like the Legislature to consider more scholarship monies for people pursuing degrees in education, as we have now seen a pattern of continued teacher shortages in our schools. The Department of Education is experiencing shortages in the areas of English, mathematics, foreign language, physical education, special education, and social studies. In some instances, students were deprived of a highly qualified, certified teacher in these areas for an entire school year. Additional grants for areas such as business, health care, economics, computer science and engineering, and journalism are essential if we are to begin to replace the large numbers of workers who will be retiring in the next ten years. Moreover, there are two scholarships for which the Board has never received funding: the Nicholas “Nick” Friday Music Scholarship and the Fish and Wildlife Scholarship, which was to be funded through the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

The Morris F. DeCastro Fellowship Award also needs increased funding if it is to provide a meaningful avenue for awardees. Its present funding of \$45,000 which includes salary and educational expenses is inadequate for most applicants who

sometimes are already making \$45,000 and are left with no funding to pay for their education. We are asking the Legislature's support for an increase to \$55,000 for each district, hoping to see an increase to a \$65,000 funding level, which better reflects today's college and university costs. The Board is also requesting that the language be changed to make this scholarship an outright grant to the awardee and not a loan/scholarship provision. Consideration should also be given to allow for both scholarships to be awarded in one district if the other district has no candidates. The MFDF Board also feels that a person who receives this Fellowship should be asked to give three (3) years of service to the Virgin Islands government after his/her return to the Territory. This would ensure that the VI government benefits from the advanced training that the individual has received.

The members of the 16th Board of Education promote the development, design and implementation of initiatives to close the achievement gap and improve our graduation rates from our high schools.

The Board is responsible for the following areas of educational focus and other educational endeavors which include:

- The oversight of the Territorial Scholarship/Loan Program
- The oversight of Special Legislative Grants
- The initiation and revisions of educational policies
- The oversight of the Department of Education's federal monies
- The oversight of the Department of Education's plants and facilities

The five standing committees of the Board include:

- Professional Staff Certification and Higher Education Committee
- School, Plants and Facilities Committee
- Policies, Rules and Regulations Committee
- Public and Private Sector Liaison Committee
- Executive Committee

Committees meet at regular intervals to address the educational needs of the community. In addition, there are six (6) regular Board meetings which afford the community an opportunity to address their concerns with Board members.

We commend the schools that made **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** in the Territory. There were ten (10) schools in the St. Thomas/St. John District and six (6) schools in the St. Croix District. However, it is time to work closely with schools that are not making AYP. While most grade levels are showing improvement, the progress is very slow, especially with our subgroups – the English Language Learners and the Students with Special Needs populations. Additionally, the reading scores are lagging behind; and, as we all know, students who do not read well struggle daily to achieve academically. Greater scrutiny of our administrators should also occur to ensure that they are providing the academic leadership that is necessary for students to achieve. The Board presented certificates of achievement to those schools that made AYP in support of the schools' improvement and progress.

It is time to work closely with schools that have not made AYP over 2-3 years. Parents and the community need to be notified of the schools' academic goals, types of problems that schools are having in meeting goals and milestones that have been established for the upcoming school year. The students at these schools need greater community support, and students must be held to the highest standards of academic and social development.

Moreover, we continue to make progress with the certification of education professionals in the Virgin Islands. The Board approved 367 certificates in the St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix Districts combined since our last budget hearing. The Board also approved its first five (5) candidates who utilized the VI HOUSSE (Highly Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation). We continue to work with educators to ensure that our children are being taught by teachers and supervised by administrators who are highly qualified and certified. The Board is also preparing an Administrators' HOUSSE to address the needs of our re-certification of administrators in the Territory. The Board also approved **Direct Step** – a program that offers online

courses in Special Education – for certification and re-certification. This allows for education personnel to meet the special education requirement for certification.

The School Plants and Facilities Committee conducted all school visits this year, and the report is available to you today. It is the Board's view that a comprehensive maintenance plan must be put in place to deal with the myriad of physical infrastructure problems that we found in some schools. Decisions about the combining of schools and the concern about the safety of students at the Addelita Cancryn Junior High School should be addressed. Board members were also deeply concerned about the health and safety of St. Croix students in light of the lost school days because of the noxious fumes from several sources. The health and safety of our children are of paramount importance to Board members, and we urge the Department and all other agencies to work collaboratively to minimize lost school days. The Board was particularly concerned that there was no discussion of makeup days or summer enrichment strategies to mitigate the loss of instructional time due to school closings.

The Policies, Rules and Regulation Committee is now on the third draft of its Bullying Policy and will circulate the final draft to all stakeholders for their input and response. The Board also will consider a Cell Phone Policy because of the pervasive use of cell phones by students and staff. This is significant because some school districts in the US are now using cell phones in the classroom to afford students the opportunity to access data through internet connectivity via the cell phone. The Virgin Islands must make every attempt to keep up with the latest technological advances so as not to limit our students' access to information. In a joint initiative with the Career and Technical Education Board (CTEB) and other educational stakeholders, this Board is actively reviewing the graduation requirements in the Territory. The purpose of this initiative is to work cohesively with the CTED to promote career and technical education as part of our students' educational experience. Hearings on the graduation requirements will be held in September. We are deeply concerned about the Career and Technical Programs in the Territory.

The Public and Private Sector Liaison Committee has actively participated in the St. Croix Agriculture Fair, the Joint Initiative of the CTED and the VIBE, and all

members attended honors nights, promotions and graduations in support of public education.

I know, as a community, we prefer to educate our children rather than incarcerate or bury our children. In fact, the Board would like to request an additional million dollars to support our Loan/Scholarship Program in the form of special legislative grants to support teacher education, medical education, business education, engineering education, and culinary arts/tourism education. We also would like to request an additional million dollars for career and technical education. These monies will continue to encourage our children to make positive choices to promulgate productive lifestyles. The future of the Virgin Islands is contingent upon our convincing our children that education is the key to their success. This year, 1,235 students applied for funding and will receive \$1,350.00. Again, this is woefully inadequate with the present cost of education. It is the hope of the Board that we will be able to offer a four-year degree to all eligible applicants in the near future.

Finally, we thank the Legislature for this opportunity to present our 2012 budget. In times of financial crisis, we must be careful not to discard the future of our children or to hold them hostage because we adults are facing hardships. If our children see no hope for a bright future, they will indulge in negative behaviors that will cause us to build more prisons than classrooms. The Board urges the Legislature to continue to support public education in a very systematic way in order to ensure the livelihood of our children. We must secure a better chance for our children and their children if our students are to compete in an unprecedented global network of living. It is also our hope that monies are prioritized to deal with a deteriorating physical infrastructure. Our schools should be showcases of modern, healthful environments of learning. I challenge all of us to promote public education in a concerted effort to help our children achieve academically, socially, and spiritually. I am now available for questions from members of the Committee.

