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St. Croix Office
1123 King Street
Christiansted, VI 00820
Telephone No.
340-772-4144

St. Thomas Office
P.O Box 11900
Dronningens Gade
Nos. 60B, 61 & 62
St. Thomas, VI 00801
Telephone No.
340-774-4546

WEBSITE
www.myviboe.com

**PROFESSIONAL STAFF CERTIFICATION & HIGHER
EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT**
December 22, 2022

The primary work before the Certification Committee over the past months included completion of needed revisions and updates to the Board's Professional Staff Certification Policy, a process that started four years ago. As chair of this committee for the past two years, I worked with members of this Board and others in the Department of Education, consulting entities to the Department, like REL-NEI, and the University of the Virgin Islands to update various sections of the policy and include sections that were new based on recent legislative mandates. The policy final draft was completed, has been presented to all members, was reviewed for legal sufficiency, was posted for public input, and is now ready for full Board approval and subsequent circulation to all professional staff in the Department of Education.

Another very important task of the Certification Committee included regular review, vetting, and making certification recommendations for various professionals already working or seeking to work with our students as teachers, administrators, counselors, and other professional staff. Gratitude must be extended to our Executive Director Dr. Stephanie Berry and the Board's certification officers Mrs. Dairdre Heath and Ms. Jolyn Edwards who interact with the applicants and prepare the documents for committee review, and to the few members who show up to committee meetings to participate in the review, especially since this certification committee seldom has a quorum to enable a committee recommendation. Notwithstanding that fact, it is imperative that the candidates be presented to the full Board, even without a committee motion to recommend certification, just to avoid unnecessary delays in the approval of candidates. The final list of certification recommendations for this calendar year is now before the full Board for approval.

The following are among critical issues related to certification that must be addressed.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Virgin Islands Board of Education is to provide leadership and oversight, set policy and advocate for continuous improvement of the Public Education System of the Virgin Islands of the United States.

VISION STATEMENT

Each child is provided with the best quality education which guarantees academic excellence, promotes our history and culture, and builds strong local and global communities.

1. Despite the Board's requests for information and efforts to get a clear picture of exactly how the Department's virtual program (VIVA) operates, (as part of the Board's statutory oversight responsibility), there are still matters that need to be addressed and for which clarity is needed. While some of the teachers hired by Proximity Learning to work in the Department's virtual academy have completed the VI History requirement and have submitted documentation to receive certification, there are still some who have not done so and some who seem to be teaching in areas for which they have no certification. VIBE also needs updated lists of teachers. The requested and anticipated virtual walkthrough has not yet occurred. VIBE should be able to understand just how VIVA operates and what impact it is having on our students. Data reports should be requested.
2. The task of getting the Department's records and the Board's records in sync relative to which employees throughout the territory are fully certified and which ones must be compelled to update their certification status is still a work in progress.
3. Compliance with the new Early Childhood Certification Policy must be monitored. The Department is to assist teachers with meeting the requirements and has asked the Board to consider an extension to the dates already set and approved. This should be done as soon as possible.
4. The Board can get more involved in sharing certification requirements and encouraging professional staff to value certification through the proper functioning of the Board's established Public/ Private Liaison Committee. If not, committee members who accept certification committee assignment must be willing and able to commit to the important work of the committee.
5. Two motions that most members of the Board did not support at a previous Board meeting are being put forth again for reconsideration through motions: (a) Certification policy must clearly state that any teacher selected for Teacher of the Year must hold current certification. (b) Degreed teachers who have been teaching for more than five years and are seeking certification will have the student teaching course waived as part of the requirements for full certification.

Report prepared by Jeanette Smith-Barry,

Chair of the Professional Staff Certification Committee