

# Board of Education Launches Survey to Gauge Parent and Student Opinions on Territory Schools

**Parents and students to offer feedback on educational experience in the territory**

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The V.I. Board of Education is gearing up to launch a new data collection instrument designed to capture information about how parents and students feel about schools in the territory.

“Your feedback is invaluable in shaping the future of education in our community,” said VIBE Chair Kyza Callwood in a press statement announcing the deployment of the Academic Pursuits & Learning Survey from March 25-29. “By sharing your insights, experiences and concerns, you directly contribute to the development of policies and initiatives that will enhance the learning environment for all students,” Dr. Callwood told parents and students.

Winona Hendricks, School Plant & Facilities Chair of VIBE, spoke to Consortium journalists at length about the rationale behind the survey and its necessity. The initiative comes from recent legislation that places the responsibility for curricular and instructional assessment of public schools on VIBE. “The board wanted to get a sense of how parents and students feel about standards, core instructions, curriculum guidelines etc.,” Ms. Hendricks noted.

However, the survey goes deeper than that, probing parents and students alike about how comfortable they feel approaching teachers and administrators to discuss various aspects of the learning environment. The instrument also seeks to ascertain whether stakeholders are adequately aware of school and VIBE policies and programs, and asks for feedback from parents and students in terms of questions, concerns and recommendations.

Ms. Hendricks said there are three versions of the survey: one for parents, a similar one for eighth through twelfth graders, and a simplified instrument for students in grades 3 - 7. For the younger students, “we take a little different approach – we’re using emojis, and the questions are fewer because the students are younger,” she said.

After all the surveys have been completed on March 29, VIBE intends to use the data collected to inform future decision- and policy-making. “It’s going to let us know whether parents are aware of what the curriculum requirements are...it could flesh out the fact that our students need to get to school on time, or we need to do more to address what is chronic absenteeism,” Ms. Hendricks noted.

Along with the survey being deployed to parents and students later this month, VIBE intends to conduct a test run of a new checklist in April. The Curriculum and Instruction Checklist is going to be used “to hold public education accountable for what’s being provided for our students,” Ms. Hendricks said. The checklist, which will be piloted in four schools across the territory – a K-8 school and a high school in each educational district – will be “looking at the school enrollment...looking at school programs...at standards, how early childhood programs are being implemented,” according to Ms. Hendricks. The comprehensive checklist will also evaluate classroom instructional practices and determine whether those practices are “culturally responsive.” Whether a school supports career assistance, teacher training, the use of technology as a learning tool, and public input will also be examined.

The pilot will ensure that the checklist is ready to deploy across the territory at the beginning of the new school year in September.

Of the parent and student surveys, Ms. Hendricks urged robust participation in the online instruments. “This estimation is so important for changing the direction of education in the Virgin Islands,” she said. VIBE, working in alignment with policy from the U.S. Department of Education, wants to “create stronger expectations for academic achievement of our students” who “we know...are so talented,” Ms. Hendricks declared.