

## Former VIDE Counselor Publishes Book to Guide Students Beyond College and Toward Vocational Success

Former VIDE counselor Mia Felix, now in Florida, has published **Beyond the Bell** to guide USVI and U.S. students through post-secondary options, addressing gaps in parental knowledge and tackling the stigma that trades are “lesser” than college degrees.

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**Mia Felix, former VIDE counselor and author of *Beyond the Bell: A High Schooler's Guide to College & Career Success*.**

A former V.I. Department of Education (VIDE) counsellor has [published a book](#) that she hopes will help guide high-school students during a crucial decision-making period.

For Mia Felix, who taught at the Charlotte Amalie High School before becoming the counsellor at the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School, helping students onto a vocational pathway was her passion. She carried that torch even after relocating to Tampa, Florida after the 2017 hurricanes and continuing as a career and college counsellor there. “I felt that they didn't really get as much assistance when it came to what's next, because a lot of times people think it's only college,” Ms. Felix said in an interview with the Consortium.

It's not a problem that's unique to the USVI. Ms. Felix observed that there is “a void all across the board” with parents unable to help their students “navigate” the world of post-secondary education. “They themselves maybe didn't go to a college or university, so they're not familiar at all, or it's been a long time since they've done it, and the process has changed,” observed Ms. Felix as possible reasons for the current challenge.

“The parents don't really know where to start, how to navigate it. Sometimes it's frustrating for both the parent and the student,” Ms. Felix has observed. She says that most high school students simply “want to be successful” and do not necessarily wish to attend a four-year college. In fact, she has noted a “growing trend” of students willing to pursue alternate paths. “It may sound good to be a doctor or a lawyer, but if you don't like doing that, then you're never going to be happy,” she said.

“They're realizing that they can achieve their goal with maybe doing a certification program or some type of apprenticeship,” she continued. However, Ms. Felix says there is “still a stigma with trades.” Society has deemed vocational jobs and blue collar work as being “lesser” than those requiring academic credentials. With parents, there is “a little bit of struggle for them to realize that that's not necessarily always the truth.” In her role as a guidance counsellor, Ms. Felix has to regularly remind parents of the constant need for trades.

Though not currently resident in the territory, Ms. Felix is nevertheless encouraging Virgin Islands students to work diligently toward securing apprenticeships and local training or shadowing a professional in their field of interest. Solid advice, given the [influx of construction jobs](#) about to become available as part of the territory's reconstruction boom.

Ms. Felix is aware, though, that this type of planning for life after high school can be “very cumbersome,” particularly if students have insufficient guidance. It's why she sought to “help more people efficiently,” with the publication of her book “Beyond the Bell: A High Schooler's Guide to College & Career Success.” Intended for students as young as 9th graders, Ms. Felix is hoping that it will provide additional clarity for its core audience. “The earlier [you] start, the less stress it's going to be in your senior year,” she explained.

Available for purchase online, Ms. Felix hopes her publication will serve as a valuable resource for students in her homeland. While she is open to returning to St. Thomas, she noted that the V.I. Department of Education currently has no positions for career and college counselors. “If that became a thing, I definitely would consider relocating,” she said.

Until then, Ms. Felix is doing her part to ensure students are better prepared for the world of opportunities that exist after graduating from high school.