

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. of Education Pares Down Marking Periods, Says Plans for Virtual Graduations Ongoing

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The VI Department of Education has restructured the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, paring the calendar down to three marking periods. "By doing this, students overall final averages will be calculated using final averages for the first, second and third marking periods," said Dept. of Education Commissioner Raquel Berry Benjamin, speaking during the Bryan administration's mid-week coronavirus press briefing on Wednesday.

The fourth marking period will not be included in the calculation of final grade average. "The fourth marking period will be used for academic enhancement or credit recovery. Grades earned during the fourth marking period will be used to replace a student's failing

third marking period grade or enhance a student's passing grade," Ms. Berry Benjamin said. "An average of 70 percent is the required passing minimum grade per student."

The commissioner said plans for virtual graduations were well underway at the department. Though Ms. Berry-Benjamin had already spoken about the virtual graduation experience during a previous press briefing, a press release this week from Senator Kenneth Gittens called on the department to [postpone, not cancel](#) the in-person, traditional ceremonies. To that end, the commissioner said D.O.E. was considering "a variety of graduations for the 2019-2020 school year, and we've already begun exploring virtual options."

D.O.E. will be offering summer enrichment and credit recovery opportunities during the summer months. "These will likely be done remotely," the commissioner said.

Additionally, school-based personnel will be on Spring Break from April 27 to May 1. During that time remote-teaching and meals distribution will be fully suspended, the commissioner said. Teaching and meals distribution will resume on May 4.

The fourth marking period is from March 23 to June 4, Ms. Berry-Benjamin said. The last day of school for the 2019-2020 school is June 4.

The department will soon distribute laptops and internet devices for students in need, the commissioner said. "The priority will be given to 12th grade students who have earned less than a 70 percent average as of March 17th. The items will be further distributed to 11th graders down with average of less than 70 percent. Students who are passing but are in need of the electronics will be the last in line, Ms. Berry Benjamin said.

A distribution schedule will be publicized when it is finalized.