

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bryan Announces Racquel Berry As His Choice For Department Of Education Commissioner

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Racquel Berry, above, who has worked at the Department of Education in the St. Thomas-St. John District for years as a superintendent, was announced by Governor Albert Bryan as his choice for commissioner of D.O.E. The announcement was made during Mr. Bryan's first State of the Territory Address on Monday night, where the territory's leader vowed to focus on early childhood education as one of his top priorities for the department.

"Our strategy is to utilize our Department of Education in tandem with the Department of Labor, the University of the Virgin Islands and our Career and Technical Board to focus on the intersectionality and make those our priorities in creating our workforce pipeline,"

the governor said.

He added, "The key to this success, however, is continuing our focus on early childhood education. The expansion of the education system to include K-4, which has been mandated by law, is far overdue. That is the foundation of this pipeline.

"It is our goal to expand this program into as many schools as it takes to ensure access to every four-year-old in the territory. I had the opportunity to see this in action at the Claude O. Markoe School through its "Granny Preschool" pilot program. It works. Some four-year-olds were already meeting the educational benchmarks of the average kindergarten student."

The governor also announced \$2 million in Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery funds for apprenticeship and national certification programs to train young Virgin Islanders in specific trades. "We have to, and we will retool our career and technical training and provide more access to students in the St. Thomas-St. John District where there are limited resources. We will move toward the goal of producing technically trained workers who are nationally certified," the governor said during his address.