

The Virgin Islands Consortium

V.I. Board of Education Announces Proposal to Return Public School Students to In-Person Learning Beginning Dec. 6

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The V.I. Board of Education announced Friday a proposal to return all Virgin Islands public school students to in-person learning before the Christmas break.

The plan calls for high school students to report to school on December 6 and junior high students on December 13. School-based personnel would return to their respective campuses on Monday, November 29 in order to prepare for and support the return of this cohort of students to in-person learning, according to the board.

The board said it formulated its proposal after months of carefully monitoring Covid-19 infection rates and public health protocols, in addition to evaluating best practices of school jurisdictions across the country that have successfully navigated the return to in-person learning.

"It is our position that public school students can safely return to school sooner rather than later," said Board Chairperson Kyza Callwood. "There are both risks and benefits associated with in-person learning, but in this case, we believe the benefits of a safe return to the physical schools, coupled with our students' academic, social and emotional well-being outweigh the risks."

Before any reopening effort is attempted, the V.I. Dept. of Education and the V.I. Board of Education would have to agree to a plan.

Governor Albert Bryan [on Tuesday said](#) his administration was planning for a phased method that would see all students returning to in-person learning early January. "We are really making a resolve to return our students to in-person learning, and we're looking to phasing in the school population no later than January 10 following the Christmas break," Mr. Bryan said during his weekly press briefing. He added that the downward trend in active Covid-19 infections "may allow us to consider an earlier return, so be alert to that."

On Friday, the Board of Education said its proposal is only one of the ways it has been working to support the territory's public education system and students. The release further stated that since January 2021, the board established the Distance Learning Policy to support the administration of online learning and has also timely processed almost 200 teacher and other education professional certificates.

"Board members have toured the schools in both districts and met with the VIDE on several occasions to address school readiness concerns," stated the release. "In addition, the Board is currently seeking public comment on its revisions to 9-12th grade promotion and retention, grading system and graduation requirements. According to Mr. Callwood, all these activities both support and reinforce the board's commitment to advance the territory's public education system."

According to the release, Mr. Callwood and the members of the 20th Board of Education are looking forward to seeing all public students back in schools before the end of the year.

"This past year of virtual and hybrid learning has been difficult and quite challenging for both students and staff," he said. "With a lower rate of infection, opportunities for school aged children to become vaccinated, and public health protocols in place, I am confident that the time is right for our students, families and teachers to return to the classroom environment."

See the V.I. Board of Education's "Guidance to Support and Reopen USVI Public Schools Reentry Action Plan" [here](#).

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