

Virgin Islands Education Strikes New Course of Action

U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Education

Strategic Performance Management

Summer 2016

Building State Capacity and Productivity Center

& Florida and Islands Comprehensive Center

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) began an intensive examination of the U.S. Virgin Islands' education future and VIDE's role relative to the two school districts and communities in shaping that future. The Commissioner, Dr. Sharon Ann McCollum, and selected leaders representing VIDE, both districts, and several schools met for three days each month beginning in January 2016 to formulate a strategic direction. The VIDE strategic direction--including a vision statement, mission, values, goals, strategies, and milestones--is the foundation for the agency's bold move into performance management as a way to improve the quality and responsiveness of education for all children and youth throughout the territory.

Dr. McCollum explains that:

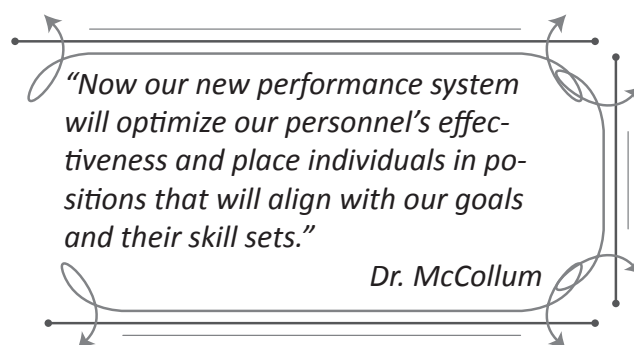
The BSCP staff have provided us direction in examining our practices and day-to-day operations. We have clearly defined our vision, mission and goals. Now our new performance system will optimize our personnel's effectiveness and place individuals in positions that will align with our goals and their skill sets. We anticipate a significant reduction in redundancy of personnel and services. Employees will not work in silos, and any disconnections within our operations will cease due to the detailed examination made of customary practices. This will give us a clear, tangible document that will effectively communicate to all stakeholders the direction and commitment of the Virgin Islands Department of Education to the trusted charge we have been given.

We anticipate our strategic performance management will help to eliminate non-productive practices. The Department will operate more effectively in light of the fiscal constraints we face. The process will drive the efficient operation of the Virgin Islands Department of Education and define the zenith of best practices we must give to our students to ensure their success.

More than a Plan

The process VIDE is following was developed by the Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center, a Texas-based technical assistance center associated with Westat that works with state education agencies and territories across the country, without cost to those education agencies. The BSCP Center's Strategic Performance Management (SPM) process overcomes a common problem with strategic plans—lots of thinking that ends up as a paper report with little impact. The Center brought together experts on strategic planning and performance management, from the education and business sectors, to devise a methodology that culminates in the state or territory implementing an ongoing management system based on performance management principles.

The BSCP Center (2015) describes it this way: "SPM draws everyone in the SEA (state or territory education agency) into a smoothly operating, open system that recognizes their contributions and encourages their innovation" (p. 3). "Strategic Performance Management (SPM) wedes *strategic planning* with *performance management* in a living system that provides direction for people's work while allowing for innovation and adjustment in course



to produce better results more efficiently. SPM includes elements of strategic planning and connects them to performance measures, productivity considerations, and ongoing processes for gauging progress, improving practice, and exceeding expectations” (p.4).

Other features of the BSCP Center’s approach are: (1) a focus on the state’s or territory’s relationship with districts, schools, families, and communities; (2) rooting the state’s or territory’s way of doing business in clearly identified values and expectations that it holds for itself; and (3) strong, purposeful consideration of what is best for every student in the state or territory when developing the state’s or territory’s goals. Further, the BSCP Center’s consultants work alongside consultants from another cost-free technical assistance service—the Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center at ETS—that will continue to support the territory long after the VIDE strategic direction is adopted and the performance management system is put in place.

The VIDE’s performance management system, rooted in its new strategic direction, will go into full effect July 1, 2016, with every person in VIDE working toward annual, strategy-aligned milestones. On June 9–11, division leaders met to begin developing action plans aimed at the strategy-aligned milestones. Unit leaders will meet in July to complete the action plans. SPM’s online planning and reporting system will track progress while encouraging collaborative teams to consider innovative ways to achieve better results more efficiently.

VIDE’s Role in the U.S. Virgin Island’s Education Future

The VIDE Strategic Performance Management System reveals the direction the agency sees for itself and for education in the territory. The proposed vision statement for VIDE states: *“The VIDE embraces ALL students and empowers them to achieve their fullest potential.”* The mission statement succinctly describes VIDE’s work: *“The VIDE provides a safe and nurturing environment, high quality instruction, and continuous supports so ALL students succeed in college and careers in a globally diverse world.”*

VIDE’s values express its expectations for itself and its relationship with students, families, the community, and the general public: The VIDE believes our students are the nucleus of everything we do, and through high quality instruction, ALL students achieve their fullest potential. We value:

- Active family and community engagement
- Adaptability
- Commitment
- Competency
- Continuous professional growth
- Honesty and integrity
- Passion
- Proactivity
- Respect for the unique culture of the Virgin Islands, and
- Teamwork.

VIDE’s goals foreshadow the territory’s heightened emphasis on the progress, aspirations, and interests of each and every student.

Goal 1: ALL students will be reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade.

Goal 2: All students will met or exceed their annual targeted growth in core academic subjects.

Goal 3: All students will demonstrate proficiency in technology.

Goal 4: All students will graduate high school prepared to succeed in college, career, and as citizens in a globally diverse world.

Goal 5: All students will demonstrate behaviors that positively impact social and emotional development, academic learning and physical, and mental wellbeing.

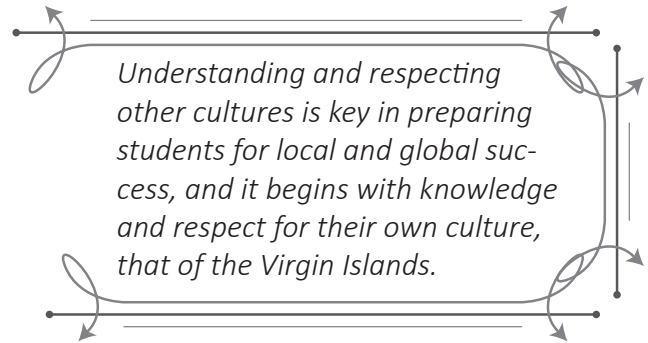
Goal 6: All students will demonstrate knowledge and value of Virgin Islands culture (e.g., history, customs, manners, traditions, arts) and understand and respect other cultures to be successful in cross-cultural situations.

Blueprint for Action

The VIDE vision, mission, values, and goals may look familiar, but they differ from most government agency plans in critical ways. The terms and phrases below signal VIDE's unique approach to leadership in education and in the U. S. Virgin Islands.

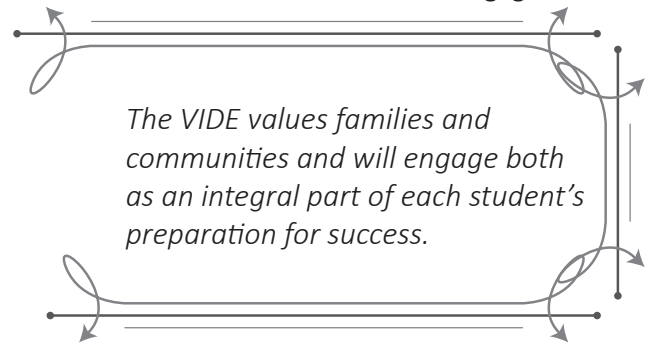
Leadership in Education

- **Personalized learning:** The Internet, learning technologies, and advances in learning science enable us to focus on each student's education as never before. The research literature describes strategies to truly personalize learning, adapt instruction, apply learning analytics, tap into each student's interests and aspirations, enrich the curriculum, target supports, and design learning pathways suited to each student. The VIDE is embracing this exciting work, focusing on building a strong foundation in reading instruction first (Goal 1), and supporting educators, students, families and the community in personalizing learning for all students. Of course, personalization is much more than technology, it is adapting instruction for each student, building each student's personal competencies, and engaging with each student's aspirations.
- **Annual targeted growth:** We want all students to meet benchmarks along the pathway to college and career readiness; however, rate of learning or growth often varies from one student to another. Students meeting benchmarks at a faster pace are expected to maintain this higher rate of progress, learning on a steeper trajectory. Students falling short of benchmarks require accelerated learning to catch up. Data related to each student's rate of growth enables educators to personalize learning for each individual student. Students and parents need to understand growth rate, be included in growth data discussions, and be engaged in instructional decisions to sustain or accelerate each student's rate of learning.
- **Equitable access to technology:** All students need to know how to use current technology, have the curiosity and persistence to learn new technologies as they are developed, and utilize technology to learn, communicate, and solve problems. Equitable access to technology is more than providing a device and connectivity. It also means giving every student equal opportunity to learn from educators who understand technology and can use it to create quality learning experiences that broaden student content learning and their application of technology to solve real world problems.
- **Success beyond high school:** College and career pathways that start early and provide integrated academic and work-based learning experiences prepare students for success beyond high school. Each student's pathway is based by his or her interests and aspirations rather than levels of performance (Lebow, et.al, 2012). Instruction along pathways integrates academic learning with work-based learning (e.g., internships, apprenticeships, service learning) to provide students opportunities to apply academic skills while developing and practicing personal competencies, such as reliability, persistence, attentiveness, self-management and a sense of responsibility, related to successful employment (Rogers-Chapman & Darling-Hammond, 2013). One indication of how well the education system has prepared students for the next steps in life is to see how they are faring a year after graduation. VIDE will utilize data and information from former graduates to continually improve education for current and future students.
- **Social and emotional well-being:** What a student knows, how well a student directs his or her own learning, a student's persistence in pursuing a goal, and a student's emotional well-being, social skills, and sense of responsibility are critical to learning and to life. Intentionally building these skills and competencies is the work of teachers, coaches, and counselors (See ACT Research Report, 2015; Redding, 2014; Dymnicki et.al, 2013).
- **Success in a Globally Diverse World:** Understanding and respecting other cultures is key in preparing students for local and global success, and it begins with knowledge and respect for their own culture, that of the Virgin Islands.



Leadership for the Virgin Islands

- **Supported and valued staff:** VIDE is also committed to providing a healthy and safe work environment, supporting the well-being of its employees to enable people to perform their work duties with less stress, and ensure job satisfaction. VIDE also values investment in the professional growth of all its personnel.
- **Teamwork:** The VIDE values teamwork and will operate with a team approach in which its employees function as members of the all-VIDE team and specific, task-oriented teams, regardless of where they are located or what school district they are serving. Teams count on the performance of each member and have a vested interest in building the capacity of each member to perform at higher levels. Teams are vehicles for amplifying the expertise and experience of each member as others learn from them. The VIDE's team approach will permeate throughout the districts and schools to engage educators in planning, improving, sharing, learning, and monitoring progress.
- **Commitment to family and community:** The VIDE values families and communities and will engage both as an integral part of each student's preparation for success. VIDE will contribute as an institutional member of the Virgin Islands community, and its personnel will serve the community in meeting its educational needs.
- **Powerful Partnerships:** It really does take a village to raise and educate a child, and VIDE is reaching out to strengthen current business and community partnerships and build new ones to improve reading across the territory, expand work-based learning to specifically address community needs, and create new programs of study to build a strong workforce for future industries. VIDE will expand work-based learning (e.g., apprenticeships, internships) to address community needs, engage students in strengthening their communities, and instill in students a value for productive community engagement.



When it comes to *embracing ALL students and empowering them to achieve their fullest potential*, the VIDE is moving forward as a leader for others to follow. The VIDE strategic performance management system is an advanced way of doing business and a model for state and territory agencies. But VIDE's most salient message, conveyed through its strategic direction, is that the VIDE, which includes the St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix school districts, exists to lead and provide *a safe and nurturing environment, high quality instruction, and continuous supports so ALL students succeed in college and careers in a globally diverse world*. VIDE will achieve its goals through its people, the families and communities, the businesses and organizations of the Virgin Islands.

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Consultants Assisting VIDE with Strategic Performance Management

Dr. Allison Layland is currently a consultant with the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP) working on implementing a strategic performance management process with State Education Agencies. She has engaged in strategic planning in both education and business. Dr. Layland was formerly with the Colorado Department of Education and Maryland Department of Education, as well as a manager with Lucent and AT&T. She is also an education specialist for Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center at ETS providing technical assistance related to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and has supported nine states on effective supports and services for students with disabilities.

Dr. Layland has more than 20 years of teaching and leadership experience in general and special education at the school, district, and state levels. As an adjunct professor, Dr. Layland facilitated special education teacher preparation at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Dr. Layland's areas of expertise and study include strategic performance management, building capacity for systemic reform, special education and response to intervention. Dr. Layland received a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education from Mount Saint Mary College in New York, a master's degree in special education from James Madison University in Virginia, and a doctorate in education administration and policy studies from the University of Denver.



Dr. Sam Redding is executive director of the Academic Development Institute, associate director of the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd, a senior learning specialist with the Center on Innovations in Learning at Temple University, and a consultant to the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center at Westat. Dr. Redding holds a doctorate in Educational Administration from Illinois State University, master's degrees in both Psychology and English, and is a graduate of Harvard's Institute for Educational Management.

A former high school teacher, college dean and vice president, and senior research associate at the Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University, from 2005 to 2012 Dr. Redding was director of the national Center on Innovation & Improvement. He is a recipient of the "Those Who Excel" Award from the Illinois State Board of Education, the Ben Hubbard Leadership Award from Illinois State University, a Key Leader award from the YMCA, and in 2012 the Wing Institute's award for Exemplary Practice and Research in Evidence-Based Education. He has been executive editor of the *School Community Journal* since 1991. He has published books, chapters, and articles on family-school relationships, school improvement; statewide systems of support, personalized learning, innovations in learning, performance management, and school turnaround.

Dr. Redding has served on a variety of state committees, including the standards-writing committee for the Illinois State Board of Education; the Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) Leadership Team and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Parent Leadership Team; and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. He has served on various civic boards, as well as the boards of the Effective Schools Institute and Superintendency Institute. Dr. Redding has been a member of Technical Working Groups for three regional educational laboratories and two research groups. He serves on the Research Council of the Illinois Center for School Improvement.

Dr. Redding served on the IES expert panel on school turnarounds and co-authored its 2008 report: *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools* and in 2012 was a member of the U.S. contingent to Korea for an exchange on turnaround methods in the two countries. He was the founding leader of CCSSO's SCASS on state supports and interventions in 2013. Dr. Redding has consulted with more than 30 state education agencies (SEAs) on strategic performance management, systems of support, and turnaround.



Dr. Alice Lindsay, as the Director of the Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center @ETS, provides management oversight of projects conducted in Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Dr. Lindsay has over 30 years of experience in public education with 18 years in the area of Title 1 where she served as a teacher, reading specialist, program evaluator and principal. Dr. Lindsay has been with the Comprehensive Center @ ETS for 14 years serving as the Director since 2008. Dr. Lindsay's research and training interests include professional learning communities, building capacity for systemic reform, and standards and assessment implementation. Her skills include project planning, facilitation and management, educator preparation, and turning around low performing schools Dr. Lindsay holds a Doctorate of Education Degree and Master of Science Degree in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education from Florida State University.



Sue Travilla is currently a consultant with Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center working on the creation and implementation of the Strategic Performance Management Plan and the Title V Consolidated Grant in the Virgin Islands. Ms. Travilla was formerly with the School Board of Manatee County for 31 years. She spent 15 years working in Title I elementary schools as a teacher and Reading Specialist. She was a district Title I administrator in the Federal Grants Department for 16 years overseeing the budgets, Title I funded programs, school improvement and monitoring for 25 Title I schools at the elementary, middle and high school level. Sue received a bachelor's degree in elementary education from West Virginia Wesleyan College and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from National Louis University.



April Munroe-Phillips, as the Virgin Islands State Manager for the Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center at ETS (FLICC), facilitates the work of FLICC providing technical assistance to the Virgin Islands Department of Education. April Munroe-Phillips brings over 35 years of educational experience across the continuum of pre-K to post-secondary institutions with a focus on early learning success working with young children, parents, community and governmental agencies, educators, post-secondary students and policymakers. After teaching in the elementary classroom for 20 years, she joined the St. Thomas-St. John District Leadership Team developing and managing programs, delivering professional development, and providing technical assistance to teachers and administrators. Collaborations with the VI Early Childhood Advisory Council (VI ECAC) yielded *The Virgin Islands Early Learning Guidelines* and *The Virgin Islands Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines*. April Munroe-Phillips received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education from Millersville State University in Pennsylvania and a Master of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of the Virgin Islands.

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