

**21<sup>ST</sup> VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SCHOOL PLANTS AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE  
FINAL REPORT**

The 20<sup>th</sup> VIBE's School Plants and Facilities committee is comprised of Nandi Sekou, Winona Hendricks, Angel Bolques, Jr., and Emmanuella Perez-Cassius (chairperson). This committee aimed to enhance the safety of schools and their occupants by encouraging all mandated agencies to identify and maintain a standard of reporting to the VIBE. The committee baseline data was formed by conducting school walkthroughs in each district. Next, the committee created and approved a Standard Walkthrough Checklist and delivered detailed SMARs for school years 2020-2022, including input from mandated agencies and principals. It was a high priority for the committee to inform the Governor's administration and Legislators of the status of all school plants and suggested Legislative language that would support the Virgin Islands School system. In 2022 the committee focused on meeting with all mandated agencies; however, only the Health Environmental division and the VI Fire Department accepted the invite and participated.

Members were concerned about the political structure of the VIDE. Based on observation and discussions with VIDE personnel, members conclude that the school lacks shared governance. The VIDE operational structure prevents individuals and principals from governing their schools. VIDE management must present shared goals for site maintenance or capital project priorities. The SPF committee input included information that identified pathways to achieve school success, safety, and maintenance. Future approaches should have the flexibility and determine the school culture applied. Members highlighted concern about work on capital projects and verifying progress in real-time along with VIDE strategy.

The committee continuously pursued feedback from the reporting agencies to clearly understand the agency's operational reporting priority. The committee wrote to all agencies requesting submitted reports include the name of the school(s) visited, inspection date(s), the contact information of the person completing the report, and area(s) of responsibility for the inspection deficiencies: Reports should also include Challenges/violation citations/ indicators of inadequate practice(s), Critical violations, Health & safety, accidents, complaints, and non-critical violations. The committee also recommended government agencies should state school safety accomplishments in reports. The SPF committee encourages the 21st board to build on the connections made and unfold the various governmental agencies' roles in the SMAR and addressing school safety and principal concerns.

**The SPF committee findings for 2021 based on site walkthrough across the territory:**

- Signage needed throughout the campus
- In school Nurse needed
- Annual Air Quality/Water testing needed
- Lack of school principal and teacher annual evaluations conducted
- Open fence perimeters that are not monitored/locked but are easily accessible to unauthorized persons.
- Block off condemned spaces on campus
- classroom/roof/window leaks
- Update on school electrical/plumbing systems

**21<sup>ST</sup> VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SCHOOL PLANTS AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE  
FINAL REPORT**

- fire extinguisher charged or updated
- visible evidence of mold or moldy odors
- Stagnant capital project contracts
- School intercoms are either missing or non-existent throughout the entire campus.
- Walkie talkies are available but not adequate to assist with large scale incidents
- School Cameras are non-operational since the 2017 hurricanes.
- Inadequate number of School Monitors
- Limited drill practices specifically for active shooter lock downs, and earthquakes
- Emergency response plan is not posted on campuses nor accessible to all school populations

**The SPF committee suggested legislative language based on site walkthrough across the territory**

- The VIBE requests authority under the law to authorize the opening and closing of schools including emergency shut down or permanent site closures.
- The VIBE recommends amending 17 V.I.C. § 24(3) language to 1) require auxiliary agencies to annually submit a report as provided in subsection d of this section, and 2) establish a clear timeline and deadline for submission of this report i.e., no later than 30 days following the start of the school year. We also recommend all reports from said agencies be simultaneously submitted to the VIBE and VIDE.
- The VIBE recommends including language under Title 17 that mandates the Commissioner of Education to report on the "State of Education" to the VIBE two weeks before the reopening of school to inform all education stakeholders.
- The VIBE recommends adding language to Title 17 stating, 60 days after receiving the SMAR, the Legislature's Education and Workforce Development committee shall hold a hearing to address concerns and recommendations made by the VIBE.

**Outcomes/Findings from VIFD connection**

- Members highlighted ways VIFD can align with VIBE's structure, including reporting on safety, drills, and school site infractions.
- Members shared input with VIFD in school safety plans, fire drills, responsible parties, and reporting processes.
- The National Fire Protection Associations' rules and guidelines govern school safety, VIFD annual training safety guidelines and procedure training for district and school leadership
- Needed CPR certification-mandated legislation.
- Inspections and reporting are missing cross-sector engagement
- Voided areas are reports being submitted solely to VIDE; Based on the VI code, both agencies are equally responsible for the management and safety of school site maintenance.

**21<sup>ST</sup> VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SCHOOL PLANTS AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE  
FINAL REPORT**

- The committee began creating a standard of operation for monitoring and reporting School Plant and Facilities safety incidents, including updating the standard walkthrough checklist.

**Outcomes/Findings from Health Environmental connection**

- DOH environmental guidelines are based on NEHA standards
- The department reporting focuses on two areas: General Sanitation and Vector control.
- Inspectors verify locations in cleanup, school surroundings rodents, and insect infestation.
- Inspectors verify all schools must have complete spill kits.
- Health supports VIDE through training in correct sanitized clean up, kitchen management,
- DOH provides courtesy calls before inspection except for emergencies.
- Health visits all schools twice a year and report back to VIDE.
- VIDE reports to VIBE once a year by VIBE request only.
- Granny Pre-K Classrooms have a slightly different inspection process guided by dept. of Human Services.
- Vector control techs in each district monitor all schools for Mosquito,
- No structure established to monitor other environmental safety areas.
- National FDA regulates all eating spaces twice a year. (schools & senior homes)
- Areas of concern highlighted by members include VIDE complete reporting to VIBE. Superintendents use maintenance to address Vector issues like broken screens, high grass, and garbage disposal
- Kitchen managers lack training in food and environmental safety.
- Health issues and de seis orders for shutting down areas of school sites without VIBE notification.
- No system in place identified clear responsibility between VIDE, VIBE, and VI Waste management for reporting to VIBE. Health loops VIWM in when issues with grease traps and garbage disposal violations are found.

**Final Key Dynamics Follow-up matters:**

- • VIFD inspection is based on NFPA rules & regulations; however, VIDE and VIBE need training in NFPA guidelines.
- School annual safety plans approval and testing
- A proposed legislation by Senator Kenny Gittens on CPR
- School Fire Drill observation and process
- School Sprinkler systems repairs/upkeep/updated to meet national regulations
- No current written policy or law-making school safety plans accessible to the public
- Standard Operation Suggestion:
  - Committee standing meeting calendar, including quarterly check-in with VIFD
  - VIFD and the SPF committee create SOP for future monitoring and reporting
  - Update and standardize the Fire Drill process, including responsibility and timeline
  - Standardize a walkthrough plan to include timeline and agency responsibilities

**21<sup>ST</sup> VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SCHOOL PLANTS AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE  
FINAL REPORT**

- Create a standard form for agencies to attach to reports before submitting to VIDE and VIBE that includes the details for accountability.
- Follow up with DPNR, and labor/Osha, Dept. Public Works
- The committee needs to verify the process for pre-k inspection and mandate reporting to the VIBE as we advance.