

# STATEMENT

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## Statement by Honourable Sharie B. de Castro Minister for Education, Youth Affairs & Sports on the Meet The Minister Initiative

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**Statement by Honourable Sharie B. de Castro**

**Minister for Education, Youth Affairs & Sports**

**At-Large Representative**

**Fifth Sitting of The Second Session of The Fifth House of Assembly**

**Tuesday, 3rd June, 2025**

**Statement by The Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports**

**Meet The Minister Initiative**

Madam Speaker, as Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, I remain steadfast in my commitment to fostering open communication, active collaboration, and shared accountability within our education system. One of the key mechanisms through which we are advancing this commitment is the “Meet the Minister” initiative—a platform purposefully designed to facilitate direct engagement with the educators who stand at the very heart of our system. It reinforces our belief that meaningful educational reform cannot happen in isolation from those responsible for delivering learning every day. We are therefore committed to ensuring that our teachers are equipped with the tools, materials, and personnel they need to succeed; consistently supported through relevant and high-quality professional development; and provided with teaching and learning environments that are safe, modern, and conducive to success.

We began this initiative in 2022 by meeting all secondary educators and all primary educators separately to commence our discussions. It was during those initial engagements that the Ministry identified our core priority areas of infrastructure, resources, and professional development. Following that, we proceeded to meet with specific groups to gain a deeper understanding of their unique mandates and operational realities.

To date, Madam Speaker, I have had the privilege of meeting with several critical subject departments and service areas, including Science, English, Physical Education, Mathematics, Student Support Services, School Counsellors, the Virgin Islands School of Technical Studies, and Music. These engagements have been more than informative—they have been transformative. I have heard, first-hand, the stories of triumph and tenacity, the candid challenges, and the forward-thinking ideas emerging from classrooms across this Territory. Whether it is a science teacher pioneering hands-on experiments in under-resourced labs or a special educator advocating for adaptive tools to better reach students with diverse needs, the message is clear: our educators are not only doing the work—they are leading the change.

As a result of these meetings, we have received strategic resource lists from the various departments and service areas. These lists have played a pivotal role in enabling the Ministry to supply materials that align directly with the specific needs and demands of classrooms throughout the Territory. This targeted approach ensures that the resources provided are not only timely but also highly relevant to the teaching and learning context.

These meetings have helped to sharpen the Ministry's understanding of where strategic intervention is most needed and have already informed policy discussions related to curriculum support, training pathways, and school-level resourcing. The initiative has also reaffirmed that when teachers are heard, respected, and empowered, the entire system benefits—students most of all.

Madam Speaker, this initiative is not a public relations exercise. It is a deliberate investment in relationship-building and system transformation. It is a reminder that the future of education in the Virgin Islands will not be written by policy alone, but by partnership— between Ministry and school, between teacher and leader, between government and community.

I wish to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the many educators who have participated in these sessions with honesty, clarity, and hope. Your engagement is making a real difference. You have not only informed the Ministry's agenda—you have helped shape its direction.

In the coming weeks, I look forward to continuing these engagements with the remaining departments at Elmore Stoutt High School. Next school year, we will engage primary schools and the sister island schools. We will continue to ask questions, listen intently, and work collaboratively to ensure that our education system is resilient, responsive, and relevant for today's learners and tomorrow's leaders.

Together, we will continue to transform education, empower our teachers, and ensure that every child in the Virgin Islands is supported to succeed—regardless of their background, ability, or circumstance.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.