GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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2025-2056 School Year – Full STEAM Ahead: Future Focused, Student Centered Professional Day 2025 — “Change is the Currency” By Honourable Sharie de Castro Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports

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2025-2056 School Year – Full STEAM Ahead: Future Focused, Student Centered

Professional Day 2025 — “Change is the Currency”

By Honourable Sharie de Castro

Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports

Three years ago, when we began this journey, I encouraged you to give more, to get change.

Real change. Transformational change. Change is the currency of transformation. The capital of reimagining education.

Change is not small.
Change is not silent.

Change is bold, brash, brilliant.
It rattles the vaults of tradition,
it rewrites the ledgers of learning.

When we think of “change,” we think of coins jingling in pockets,
nickels and dimes exchanged hand to hand.
But this change—this change—is not loose coins.
It is millions invested.
It is time, energy, evenings, and endless effort
deposited like treasures into the Bank of Education.

And educators—
you have been the tellers at the counter,
translating tomorrow one transaction at a time.
You are the brokers of belief,
the custodians of curiosity.
Every question you entertain,
every mistake you redeem,
every dream you dare to underwrite
compounds like interest,
yielding dividends for decades to come.

Yes, change is costly.
It costs you your evenings, your energy, your comfort zones.
But what you purchase with that change
is a return on investment no earthly bank can match:
a legacy written in lives,
a wealth measured in generations.

And still—when there is profit, there are always predators.
Every vault of value draws a thief.
Every treasure attracts a trespasser.

Our children are the treasure.
Our future is the fortune.

But masked intruders lurk at the door—
fraudsters of focus,
burglars of belief,
hackers of hope.

They come in many disguises:
peer pressure dressed as popularity,
violence masked as power,
cynicism whispering, “Why try?”

They come to steal attention,
to kill ambition,
to destroy potential.

But here—here in the Bank of Education—
we are not passive shareholders.
We are vigilant guardians.
We insure every investment.
We hedge against every hazard.
We build vaults strong enough to withstand the break-in.

For every lie, we counter with truth.
For every loss, we offer love.
For every deficit, we deposit discipline and dignity.
Because no child’s inheritance will be stolen on our watch.

And what is the profit of all this?
What is the return on these deposits of time, talent, and treasure?
The profit is not counted in dollars.
It is counted in destinies.
The profit is a territory whose economy is secured
by the brilliance of its children

Who are debt-free of doubt,
credit-rich in courage,
liquid in love,

equity-heavy in empathy.
This is the balance sheet we seek—
a generation in the black,
a nation unbankruptable.

And let us be clear:
this change is not for us alone.
This change must be future focused and student-led.

Because they are not just our clients—
they are our co-signers.

We must let them sit at the table,
let them speak into the strategy,
let their voices shape the portfolio of progress.
Because a future purchased without their participation
is a future they may never claim.

Through Meet the Minister, we made it plain:
Infrastructure. Training. Resources.
The trinity of transformation.

And yes—we've done it in phases.
Step by step.
Initiative by initiative.
Deposit by deposit.

Because great investments are not made in haste—
they are built, they accrue,
they compound over time.

Schools have been made resilient, ready for learning to take place.
Roofs reborn. Walls reinforced. Windows and doors replaced.
Fences rebuilt. Rails repainted. Electrical systems rewired.
Lights replaced. Air quality reinstated. Water systems restored.
Restrooms renovated. CCTV cameras ready. Playgrounds rejuvenated.

Through these investments,
through systematic school rehabilitation works,
we have made schools ready—
ready for teaching, ready for learning.

Because of the deposits we are making—
in teacher training, in resources, in reimagining—
Education is shifting—no longer a transaction of memorization,
but an economy of meaning.

Teachers—
you have been the lenders of learning,
extending credit far beyond the curriculum.
Every degree earned,
every certification completed,
every professional development attended—
those were not just for you.
Those were deposits into the vault of your students,
expanding what they could withdraw from your wisdom.

And the Ministry—your partner in purpose—
has matched your sacrifice with funding,

Investing in your growth so that every skill you gain,

Translates into rewards for your students.

Change is not just training and talent—
it is also the tools that make learning tangible.
We have heard. We have purchased. We have provisioned.

Some deliveries are complete,
some are underway,

These resources are more than objects—
They turn theory into practice,

textbooks into experiments,
plans into projects,
instruction into innovation.

And look—this year, 2025,
the vault of education has seen the largest deposit ever.
From 56 million to 67 million—
a deposit of 11 million dollars,
a 20 percent surge,
the largest single investment in one year.

Proof that when you give more, change grows.
We did not just add numbers to a ledger;
we multiplied possibility,
banking belief in every classroom,
compounding hope in every mind,
a transaction of transformation—
an investment into the future,

That shall one day be realized through a diversified economy.

Because education is not an expense.
It is a savings account.
Every dollar deposited is a dividend of destiny.
Every cent spent is a seed sown.
Every budget built is a bond of belief.

And the return?
It is not written in red or black ink,
but in lives transformed,
in futures secured,
in generations unborn that will grow with interest.

This is more than education.
This is security.
This is sovereignty.
This is the strongest stock we could ever hold.

For the futures we are financing cannot be foreclosed.
The inheritance we are insuring cannot be stolen.
The destiny we are depositing cannot be denied.

We are agents of change

Change that is costly.
Change that is uncomfortable.
But change that is priceless.