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Press Release

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ST. CROIX FOUNDATION RELEASES EDUCATIONAL POLICY WHITE PAPER, "CRACKING THE CODE"

St. Croix, US Virgin Islands- On Friday, June 30th, the St. Croix Foundation for Community Development Board of Directors and its 20/20 Education Steering Committee will officially release a 17-page Education Policy White Paper entitled, "Cracking the Code," during an presentation to local media representatives in the Conference Room of the Foundation's Downtown Christiansted headquarters.

The White Paper is the culmination of three and a half years of a comprehensive educational policy analysis initiated in 2013. At the inception of the project, the Foundation convened its 20/20 Steering Committee to analyze the VI Code and local educational policies that govern the Territory's school system. Comprising business leaders, educators from public, private, and parochial schools, and the University of the Virgin Island, the Steering Committee, honed their attention on five educational priorities including: (1) student support systems, (2) instructional management and teacher quality, (3) facilities management, (4) funding, and (5) organizational design.

The White Paper focuses primarily on the last priority, Organizational Design, as the framework within which all other priorities exist and thus was the first phase of the research.

According to the Foundation's Executive Director, Deanna James, "This is a first-of-its-kind initiative for the Foundation, and it would not have been possible without the dedication and countless volunteer hours of Steering Committee members. These devoted community stakeholders, under the guidance of the Foundation's Policy Officer, mined through local operating policies, organizational charts, job descriptions, and employment contracts to better understand our educational system and to, in turn, illuminate incongruencies within the VI Code. Ultimately, this endeavor represents the kind of work that is critical to all *comprehensive* reform initiatives yet is rarely undertaken because it is tedious work and because it takes time."

As a critical component of this initiative, over the past two years, the Foundation has also convened intimate focus groups with all key education stakeholders, including almost all members of the 31st Legislature, members of the Board of Education, parents, representatives of the local teachers' union, and Department of Education administrators, including the Department's legal counsel. Input from those meetings has been included in the White Paper.

Through this work, the Foundation's overarching goal is to facilitate a deeper understanding of the VI Education System and to highlight the critical importance of policymakers adopting a *holistic, whole-system* approach to education reform. When all phases of research are complete, the data will be captured in a Policy Map accessible to the public. The White Paper serves to support **all** education stakeholders in making *fully informed* decisions about how to better align policies

with best practices. The Foundation also fundamentally believes its research can serve as a model for comprehensive systems analysis throughout other governmental instrumentalities.

Executive Director James concluded that over the course of the Foundation's 12 years of investments and direct services in the area of public education, many have questioned why education and why St. Croix Foundation. As an operating foundation committed to economic and community development, St. Croix Foundation recognizes that education underpins the economic viability and social health of the Territory. The answer is also captured in the closing summary of the White Paper;

"As we consider the impediments to forward momentum around education reform in the Virgin Islands over the past 20 years, we believe that the political and administrative 'revolving door' creates a cycle in which new visions and strategic agendas are rarely sustainable. This is true here and throughout educational systems everywhere. So, the question remains: who carries forward a vision of equity, excellence and global competition? As a place-based operating foundation, the St. Croix Foundation for Community Development's philanthropic purpose is simply this: catalyze change and hold the vision."

St. Croix Foundation extends its sincere appreciation to all community stakeholders who contributed to this work, including several corporate partners, Tropical Shipping, DIAM Management, Denali Asset Management, TEAM Consultants, OCWEN Mortgage Servicing, and countless individuals. Their core support allows the Foundation to conduct systemic work for sustainable impact. The Organization is also forever indebted to each and every steering committee member who demonstrated the purest form of philanthropy and leadership in service to the people of the US Virgin Islands.

For more information on the Foundation's educational programming or to access the White Paper, visit the Foundation's website at www.stxfoundation.org or call the St. Croix Foundation directly at 340-773-9898.