

>> Now's the time for all good men to get together with one another.
We got to iron out our problems and iron out our quarrels and try to live as brothers.
And try to find peace within without stepping on one another.
And do respect the women of the world.
Remember you all have mothers.
We got to make this land a better land than the world in which we live.
And we got to help each man be a better man with the kindness that we give.
I know we can make it.
I know that we can.
I know darn well we can work it out.
Oh, yes, we can. I know we can can.
Yes, we can can. Why can't we?
If we wanna, yes we can can.
I know we can make it work.
I know we can make it if we try.
Oh, yes, we can.
I know we can can.
Yes, we can.
>> Good morning, Virgin Islands!
This is "Ability Radio -- You and Your Life."
Here at Market Square this morning -- it's a beautiful morning.
It's gorgeous outside.
So I hope you're up and ready to get some community information.
This show is sponsored by the Lottery Commission and Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands by my fearless leader.
Amelia Headley LaMont has put this program together over the last couple years, and I am Archie Jennings, and here this morning with Jeræ Forde.
>> Good morning.
>> How are you this morning?
>> Oh, I'm awesome!

I can't believe I'm up!
>> [Laughs] Once you get up
and get running, you can't stop,
right?
>> Mm-hmm.
>> Jerae, you're here this
morning for the Department of
Education, is that correct?
>> Yes.
I'm the
Director Of School And
Community Affairs out of the
Office of the Insular
Superintendent
St. Thomas/St. John District.
>> Okay, that's a mouthful.
What does it all mean?
>> So, what it means is that I
deal with parents and community
stakeholders.
Anybody that want to get
involved in education, I'm the
liaison to get into the schools
and reach the students.
>> Okay. That sounds great.
One of the things I've always
tried to promote through the
DRCVI is more parent
involvement.
>> Yes.
>> You have something coming up
tomorrow.
>> Yes, we have our 8th Annual
Parent Conference, and it's
titled "Rebuilding Together: An
Educational Journey."
>> And what is gonna be
highlighted tomorrow?
>> So, we have several different
topics such as parental rights,
resources for math and science,
student projects, ESL.
Science, Math -- you name it.
This conference has it all.
>> All right.
ESL -- you want to tell the
community what that stands for?
>> Yes, so that's English as a
Second Language, and what this
conference does is we want to
include everyone.
So we have a section for those

under the Special Education umbrella, and we also have a section for those under English as a Second Language.

So that means that they either speak Creole or Spanish or anything other than English, and they're now coming into our system and learning English.

>> And with regard to that, how will that be taking place?

Are these workshops, or is it general sessions?

You want to explain some of the details?

>> Sure, so Sunday, tomorrow, registration starts at 9:00, and then from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, we're going to be separating ourselves after general sessions into four breakout sessions.

So we have four breakout sessions in the morning and four in the afternoon, and the parents actually get to choose what breakout session they want to go to, depending on their interest and concern.

>> And before, I noticed you had it at a larger venue.

Where is it tomorrow?

>> So, tomorrow it's at the UVI Sports and Fitness Center, and although that's not our usual venue, because of the hurricane damage, we weren't able to have it at the hotels, but we said, no matter what, we were gonna have this conference this year.

>> Great. Great.

And as I recall, having attended a couple of the other prior sessions, parents could bring their children, could they not?

>> Yes.

So, this is what I like to call a "no excuses" conference.

>> Okay.

>> So you have free childcare, so you can bring your children if you can't find a sitter.

We have free transportation from Lockhart School at 9:00 AM and 9:30, since we're all the way down west this year, and we also have ASL interpreters, translators -- you name it, we have it -- so that parents have no excuse not to come tomorrow.

>> Let's repeat that.

Free childcare?

>> Oh, you like the free?

[Laughter]

Free childcare.

Free lunch. Complimentary lunch. It's gonna be an outstanding lunch for those who love their bellies.

We're going to have free transportation to and from Lockhart School starting at 9:00 AM.

We're going to have free translators, free ASL interpreters.

We're also going to be giving away a lot of school supplies -- backpacks, totes for the parents.

I mean, you name it.

>> And for those who don't know what ASL is, those who have deaf or hard-of-hearing friends, it's American Sign Language.

So, again, I agree with you. If it's free, parents should have no excuse not to come.

It's on a Sunday, albeit, sometimes we want to sleep in a little later, get up a little early, go to church, and get to these kind of functions, but it's free.

You have no excuse.

I know last year or the year before, you showed movies to the children, and they had games, board games.

>> Yep.

>> Some things that will keep them occupied, correct?

>> Yes.

We're not just leaving your

children with anyone.
We have two public school
teachers that will be managing
the children when it comes to
taking them to the restroom,
providing them with the
complimentary lunch, playing
games, movies.

So it's not just you're gonna
stick your children in a room
and they're just gonna be so
bored.

I mean, we have activities.
Girl Scouts of America is coming
in, and they're going to be
doing activities and challenges
with the children, as well.
They're going to be learning
about musical instruments.
I mean, it's going to be an
overall informative and fun
session for them.

>> So, again, most of the women
come, but what do we got for the
fathers?

What are you gonna do to invite
them in?

You gonna show some Sunday games
or anything?

>> No, we will not be having --
I know you guys would flock to
that.

Oh, my goodness.

Then you wouldn't hear a word I
say.

>> Yeah.

We can multitask, listen to you
and watch the game.

[Laughter]

>> Well, for the fathers, we
actually have a lot.

You know, men are normally very
hands-on, very visual, and so
when taking into consideration
what breakout sessions we're
gonna have, we really make sure
that it's interactive and it's
hands-on.

So, for instance, one of the
sessions is going to be
"Hands-On With STEAM."

And so that's going to really

give fathers an opportunity to help build, to help construct, to help demolish, and then they can also take that information and teach it to their children. And so it's a lot of hands-on. So I think the men are gonna be happy.

>> All right.

I'm all for lifelong learning sessions, and we'll tie into that.

That's great, you know.

Essentially, one of those issues that I'm really trying to push is community learning centers, and now we should take a break for our sponsor and get right back.

This is "Ability Radio."

And try to find peace within without stepping on one another. And do respect the women of the world.

Remember you all have mothers.

We got to make this land a better land than the world in which we live.

And we got to help each man be a better man with the kindness that we give.

I know darn well we can work it out.

We can work it out.

Oh, yes, we can can.

Yes, we can can. Why can't we?

If we wanna get together, we can work it out.

I know we can make it.

I know that we can.

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out.
Oh, yes, we can can.
Yes, we can can.
>> Good morning again.
This is "Ability Radio" this
morning, and we're dealing with
educational issues this morning,
announcing the parent conference
tomorrow and also welcoming from
Head Start, Ms. Masikia Lewis,
How are you doing this morning?
>> I'm doing great.
Good morning to all.
>> You were on the run, as I had
just saw you coming in.
>> Yeah, literally, I was on the
run.
[Laughter]
>> Well, continuing with the
parent conference for tomorrow,
one of the things we were
talking about -- what
activities are going to be
occurring tomorrow.
And one of the issues -- because
I'm going to be there on behalf
of Disability Rights Center of
the Virgin Islands -- are
community organizations
presenting information and
talking to parents?
What other ones besides our
agency are gonna be present?
>> So, we're going to have Army,
Civil Air Patrol, Friends of the
Public Library, Human Services.
We'll also have Girl Scouts of

America, Friends of the Public Library, viNGN, WAPA -- I mean, it's going to be a conference that just brings in the community to the parents because some of my parents might not necessarily be exposed to all the amazing things that we have going on in the community and all the advocacy groups, programs -- everything that's geared towards our child.

>> Okay, great.

And the parents are given this opportunity to take directly with some of the community organizations, they'll get to better understand what are the resources?

What are some of the after-school activities that might be available for the children?

Be at the Public Library, or Girl Scouts.

And why don't you go into some of the other programs that you have or some of the workshops?

One I'm looking at --

"Inside a Teacher's Mind."

What is that focusing on?

>> So, that is going to be by Mr. Isaac Callwood.

I don't know if everyone knows him, but he does amazing interactive presentations, and this year, he is going to be speaking about how a parent's role and intervention plays a part in their child's behavior in the classroom.

So it's really connecting home and school and really showing parents exactly what teachers go through on a day-to-day basis, and when it comes to classroom management and a student's behavior and how that might be able to take away from their academic success.

So he's gonna give different tips and explain different

tips and explain different scenarios, and it's gonna be extremely interactive so that parents have a great understanding of how behavior affects academics.

>> One of the things we always push, too -- or recently, especially since our run-in with the Internet, it's a different world now -- is mathematics. And I notice one workshop you have that's helping your student with mathematics, which I know I had a great obstacle for myself when my children were coming through.

>> Me, too.

>> What is that workshop gonna entail?

>> So, it's for all ages. It's from K to 12, and it's going to be by Avon Benjamin, our mathematics coordinator at the district, and he's gonna provide the parents with online resources, math quizzes that you could give your child before a math test, how to even do math. You know, math has changed so much.

We like to call it the "new math," of doing things with the calculations.

And so there's a lot of online resources that show you exactly what it is that we're teaching in the classroom.

And so this is gonna absolutely amazing.

This is something that the parents have been asking for forever because I myself am not good at math, so I'm not sure how I would be able to then help my child who's struggling in math.

So this is going to kind of bridge the gap where they'll be able to socialize with the coordinator and explain their concerns, and then he's also

going to be able to give different tips and resources that parents can rely on when it's 10:00 at night and you're trying to figure out this math problem with your child.

>> And, of course, as I was mentioning before, pushing STEM -- Science, Technology, Engineering, Design -- you have a session on that, as well.

>> Yes.

So that's one of our major hands-on breakout sessions. It's extremely popular.

We did not last year but the year before, and it was absolutely filled.

This year, we are going to cut it off at a maximum of 30 parents, so it's a first-come, first-serve type of breakout session, but she really goes into explain all these fun, fun experiments that you could do with everyday items with your child that takes them away from the video games, takes them away from the television and the Facebook and the Snapchat and really teaches them in a fun and non-intimidating manner.

>> Okay.

How about the "Success Can Be Achieved in Science" class?

>> So, this is from Gerald Walters, and he's our Science Coordinator.

We're really trying to focus on education but making education fun.

And we have a lot -- I mean a lot -- of students, especially girls, that are very, very curious, very, very inquisitive. They like making discoveries, but, yet, science is not always pushed as an area of career opportunity.

And so he's going to show you how even just a small bit of curiosity can lead your child

into a way of success in science.
Whether it's marine biology that we have here or physiology, it doesn't matter.

It's just to try and get your child into the sciences as early as possible.

>> And, again, what grade level does this conference entail?

>> So it's from Kindergarten to 12th Grade.

We have not excluded anyone. This is a conference of inclusion, so we have the community, we have education, we have our parents.

We're trying to get every single sector of the Virgin Islands into this one conference, into this one day.

>> Okay.

Ms. Lewis, good morning.

>> Hi, again. Good morning.

>> Yes, and would you explain to the community what your position is as it relates to education through the Department of Human Services.

>> Sure.

Again, my name is Masikia Lewis, and I serve as the Administrator for the Department of Human Services Head Start Program in the Virgin Islands.

We're located on the three islands St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix.

We have an enrollment number of 894 children, and, pre-hurricane, we had 45 classrooms.

>> Okay.

Well, one thing I wanted to remind the general public is that we do have a call-in number if you have any questions for either of these two persons at 779-1079.

That's 779-1079.

And just recently, you had parent orientation, is that not

correct?

>> Yes, we had our parent orientation for Head Start, and at this parent orientation, we gave an overview of basically all of our services, which is quite particular to Head Start because Head Start doesn't just focus on the education aspect as far as relating to having preschoolers get ready for kindergarten.

We also serve as a wrap-around, full systematic service for families, as well.

So we have health services to ensure that every child that passes through Head Start, their families are linked to a medical home, we have nutritional services where we do breakfast, lunch, and snacks, and then we also do nutritional workshops so parents understand the important of good nutrition. Of course, we have comprehensive educational services, as well, for preschoolers.

We also service parent involvement, allowing parents to get engaged prior before they move on to the official educational services.

We have a disabilities area that is specifically identified for children that have special needs or are suspected for children with special needs and an advocacy program for parents, as well.

We have a mental health service where it's a social service.

We look at children that maybe have behavioral issues and also for parents if they need counseling services.

We have a licensed social worker full-time on board within our classrooms.

And then we also have Social Services, and that involves, we call it RC in Head Start, but it

involves the eligibility piece, recruitment efforts every year, and then we also have selection, enrollment, and mostly importantly, we have an attendance initiative that is for a coordinated approach with all of our delivery services to ensure that we try to encourage parents to bring their children to school from preschool, so when they transition over to education, it's a clear transition that attendance is key for a child's overall education services, benefits.

>> Okay, but the parent contacts Head Start directly.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> And what age are we talking about?

>> Once a child is turning 3 by December 31, they're eligible for the program.

So we call it 2 years, 9 months, but once they're turning 3 by December 31st, then you are able to be eligible for the program.

>> Okay. Great.

And you broke it down.

You have a total of how many students right now?

>> Right now, today, we have --

Let me do some quick math because we made some changes. We're servicing 774.

>> Okay, is that all three islands?

>> All three islands.

We have slots available for 774 children.

Before the hurricane, we had enrollment slots for 894 children.

>> Okay.

Give an idea for the parents what kind of schedule they have to adhere to.

>> Okay.

So we have services this year. We are doing full-day services. So if you are a non-working

parent, our times are from 7:45 to 3:00, and if you are a working parent, our times are from 7:30 to 5:30.

>> Okay.

Making sure they have to be there at 5:30 to pick up their children, right?

>> Yeah, 5:30 is the pickup time, you know, because staff is there, and they, too, have lives after Head Start ends.

But that's the time, 7:30 to 5:30, 7:45 to 3:00.

So we give full-day services. It's good services for children.

>> Always reminded by my children, I came at one time 5:45, and they said I abandoned them because I was late.

>> Well, yeah.

Trust me, it's not easy.

>> They keep you in line!

>> It's not easy when you're 3 and everyone has left you, and you're there with someone looking at you like, "Where is your mom?"

Where is your dad?"

>> These are 30-year-old women now.

They still gut me when they say, "Dad, do you remember when you abandoned me in kindergarten?"

>> Wow.

But that's how it feels!

That how it feels for them!

That's how it feels.

>> So, parents, take note -- Don't be late!

>> Don't be late!

>> Well, again, we're gonna take a short break for our sponsors and get right back to it.

It's "Ability Radio -- You and Your Life."

>> And we gotta take care of all the children, the little children of the world, 'cause they're our strongest hope for the future, the little bitty boys and girls.

We got to make this land a
better land than the world in
which we live.
And we got to help each man be a
better man with the kindness
that we give.
I know we can make it.
I know that we can.
I know darn well we can work it
out.
Oh, yes, we can.
I know we can can.
Now's the time for all good men
to get together with one
another.
We got to iron out our problems
and iron out our quarrels and
try to live as brothers.
>> Oh, welcome back to "Ability
Radio -- You and Your Life."
We're here with the officials
from Head Start, as well as the
Department of Education, and we
wanted to remind the fathers --
September 4th.
>> Yeah.
>> Big day.
Be there.
And what do you want them to be
there for?
>> To bring their child to
school on that first day.
That's a memorable moment for
our fathers.
We have a fatherhood initiative
with Head Start, and one of the
things that we start off the
year with is encouraging fathers
to be there for that first day
of school, to send their kids,
their children off to school.
Be there, say goodbye.
Meet a teacher.
It's just a moment, but it
lasts.
It's a footprint or imprint on a
child's mind and in their heart
that their father took them to
school for the first day.
And then throughout the year, we
have other fatherhood
initiatives that we push along

with that, but we really want to encourage fathers for that very first day to bring your child to school.

>> Well, what are some of the other initiatives?

>> We do have our Father's Day. On that day, we have different workshops, similar to the Parent Conference, but it's for father's only.

And then we have different activities.

We have Home Depot there building.

We brought EVI up.

It's just different activities, and you bring your child to that activity.

It's usually a day that we don't have any classes.

So the kids come upstairs, their dads are there with them, and it's a full day.

We've had it on St. Croix where we had a Spaghetti Night with Dad, and the fathers came out and we cooked, and they were able to enjoy a meal with their kids, and then we did breakfast. After the storm, I think it was a lunch.

>> Okay.

>> Lunch with dads.

We did that, as well.

So we have different initiatives that we have throughout the school year that encourage fathers to participate in their child's life.

We know a lot of times that time could be an issue.

>> Right.

>> A lot of other things.

But we want to ensure that they're a part of what we do within Head Start.

>> Okay.

What re some of the other parent involvement programs you had mentioned?

You have a volunteer program?

>> Yeah, we do have a volunteer program.
We call it more engagement versus participation.
So we really want to engage our parents to be a part of the program.
The whole idea is for advocacy beyond Head Start.
>> Okay.
>> We're giving them the head start and Head Start.
[Laughter]
And then we're engaging them, and then when they transition over to regular education, the parents are already a part of a system.
They already know when they have to do.
So, for instance, one of the things that we do, we allow parents to receive first aid, AED, CPR training, and that's a certificate that we offer to families.
If they're interested, they can sign up.
We also offer our CDA program, which is Certificate Development Associate.
So, for instance, families that are volunteering within our classrooms, they have an opportunity to say, "You know, I would like to be a part of the CDA program," and that is a program that Head Start -- we pay for that certification.
We allow them to work in our classrooms for that volunteer piece that they need, and then we also pay for the professor to come down to initiate the final testing for them, and we have a mentor that's working with them, as well.
So families are allowed not just to volunteer or get engagement, but they are allowed to leave from Head Start with something that they can say, "Yes, I can

move out and be self-sufficient by obtaining a CDA, by having obtained a CPR certification." Those are things that they can use beyond Head Start to make sure that their family is self-sufficient.

>> Right, and you were saying that CDA certificate, they can get employment in other locations.

>> Of course, yeah.

>> Not just the Virgin Islands.

>> No, no.

In any Head Start program or any preschool program that's within the U.S., they're required just for initiation as an assistant teacher, a CDA.

>> Okay.

>> Yeah, so they can leave from here, have a CDA, and go anywhere, and that's a certificate that's known.

>> Great. Great. Great.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> And you also mentioned that Head Start has a STEM program.

>> Well, Head Start this year, through the blessings of the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands, we obtained a grant, and we're gonna be basically including STEM in our classrooms this year.

We were supposed to start it last year, but it was half-day sessions, but we realized we can really see the fidelity of what we want to have going on when we have full-day sessions.

So this year in our classrooms, we'll be introducing STEM as part of our regular HighScope curriculum.

>> Head Start curriculum, right?

>> Head Start. Yeah.

It's HighScope.

No, it's HighScope.

That's the curriculum that we use.

>> Oh, HighScope?

>> Yeah, Head Start uses the HighScope curriculum.
[Laughter]
Yeah.
>> Have them shooting for higher goals.
That's great. That's great.
>> Yeah.
>> And one other aspect of it is making sure that the parents get the children to Head Start.
>> Yes.
>> So what are some of the initiatives that working on that goal?
>> Yes.
Attendance is always a goal.
Attendance is always a goal.
I think with every education program, attendance is a goal.
But, right now, it is one of our major objectives in our strategic planning that we really want to have a coordinated approach to attendance within our school.
Sometimes we think attendance, and we think just teachers or we think attendance and just administration.
But we want a coordinated approach, and we will have a coordinated approach in Head Start, which means that from the nutrition worker up to the teachers, to the administration, to the full management and senior staff understanding that attendance is key and vital to a child having an excellent outcome overall.
So it's not just for the parents.
We want children to actually like coming to school because at 3 and 4, if you're child is harassing you to come to school, you will break and say, "You know what, I'm tired, but you're harassing me, so let me bring you to school."
So we also have a full

embodiment, and we wanted to start it from September 4th, from the first day of school. We're not gonna wait till you're not bringing them to start pushing attendance.

We're gonna say from September 4th, attendance is key.

And when you don't bring your child to school, you miss out.

>> Right.

>> And when your child is not in school, they may have to go to another room where we're gonna be looking at chronic absenteeism, chronic tardiness, doing more home visits, and if that's not the place for you, then we will have to find children that are on our waiting lists that are there for you. So it's overall -- a coordinated approach to attendance.

So we want to encourage parents from September 4th, bring your child to school.

We are here.

>> Well, and that's good.

That's good, especially this year because one of the aspects of what I was speaking about to teachers is trauma.

Childhood trauma after a disaster, it doesn't always show up immediately after the event, so it could be a half-a-year, six months, or a year away. The parents should be really attentive and focused on their children and how they're behaving.

>> Yeah.

>> Some of those issues are gonna be address through Head Start, I assume, with the wraparound services.

>> Yeah.

>> You want to explain some of those wraparound services?

>> Well, of course, we have two full-time mental health coordinators on board, but what

we're doing this year is we are in the process of hiring an outside consultant whose background has a lot to do with trauma, and she also has a lot of background in dealing with kids with special needs and also serves as a counselor.

So she really has a lot of goodies in her pockets and benefits that really work for our program.

So that is an additional piece that we're adding on to our program for this year.

So she serves as a support for all of our personnel, for the teachers that are going through trauma, for the families.

For those kids that may need to have to be referred out and we don't know where they can go, she will serve as that person. And so she will be working with personnel, regular staff, and she will also be working with families and children, as well.

So she will be our outside consultant working along with our two full-time mental health personnel that we have on board.

So it's ensuring that when you bring your child to Head Start, if something comes up, that we are there to help you address that problem overall before it manifests and before the transition out of our program.

>> Oh, great. Great.

Making it better together.

And Jerae, just as a backdrop, are any of your workshops gonna be addressing some of those issues with regard to kids returning to school after last year's hurricane?

>> Yes.

So a lot of our community organizations, one of them, of course, is Disability Rights Center.

Another one is Human Services.

Our community organizations are going to touch on that and how they have resources, books, online resources -- things that parents can do inside the home or reach out to other community organizations.

So while the focus is on education, we are offering different resources through the community booths.

>> Right. Okay.

What about Ms. Tammy Sasso?

>> So, that's our Intervention Director.

>> Okay.

>> And she's doing Parenting 101.

>> And will she touch upon some of those issues?

I'm just wondering.

>> Yes.

So because she's our Interventions Director, she's going to be touching on how parents can intervene to try and get some of those behaviors corrected, whether you're suffering from trauma, whether you're suffering from anger and emotional problems, behavioral problems, and how parents can really make a direct step towards helping the school help the students.

>> Okay.

And, again, these are all workshops that are gonna be presented tomorrow.

>> Yes, tomorrow.

Sunday, September 2nd, and the UVI Sports and Fitness Center.

>> And one other workshop that you have down here is "When School and Culture Combine."

I'm trying to see what other information you can give on that workshop.

>> So, that session is going to be spoken completely in Spanish.

>> Okay.

>> It is directed towards our

English as Second Language learner parents, and it's going to talk about how if you're coming from someplace else -- For instance, the public school system is very, very different in the Dominican Republic, very different in Puerto Rico, and so to come in with all these cultures and customs, and then coming into a system that you might be unfamiliar with, it's really trying to bridge the gap between the two.

So that's one of our ones that we try and have every single year.

It's one that our ESL population absolutely adores.

Dr. Migdalia Arthurton deals with the community, and that community specifically, through various avenues from University of the Virgin Islands to VI Puerto Rico Friendship Day. So it's supposed to be very, very informative.

>> All right.

Cultural confidence type of a program.

>> Yes.

>> How about "A Parent Is a Child's First Teacher?"

That's another workshop.

>> So, we always love to have something motivational and something inspirational, and so this one touches more on the theoretical and touches on what you mean to your child because sometimes we just need a reminder that we are our child's first teacher, our child's advocate for life.

We hold such an important role, and just needing that reminder of how important you are to that child is really going to be the main point of that session.

>> I know in years prior, you had some sort of motivational speaker come.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> Is that taking place this year, as well?

>> So, no, due to lack of funding, we weren't able to have a guest speaker.

We had to kind of move some things around this year, given the hurricanes and the aftermath, but we said no matter what avenues and challenges we had to go through, we wanted to make sure there was a Parent Conference so we could disseminate a lot of the information, such as district initiatives, what resources parents can go to, as well as just giving parents a day where they know it's all about them. Because a parent, I'm sure you know, is a 24/7 job.

We want to give you guys a little break.

>> And how about those -- again, being in the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands -- those parents who have children with special needs?

How is that being focused upon at the workshop?

>> So, normally, we do a breakout session, and this year, we wanted to do something different because we are finding a lot more of our children are needing those academic and behavioral supports under the Special Education umbrella. So we have the afternoon general session where everyone comes together.

Mrs. Serano-Griffith, who's our Director of Special Education on the district level is going to be speaking about how you can tell, the different signs, and the things you should look out for to make sure that your child is getting all the supports that they need and whether or not they need to be tested, they

need 504 interventions, they need special education, they need a speech pathologist -- all of that.

So it's trying to make sure that the parent is aware of what their child needs in terms of supports.

>> And that goes with the notice, too, that Medicaid has different guidelines now, that they have higher incomes levels. So a lot of people may not know they may be eligible for Medicaid during 2019.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> So take advantage of those who are attentive, who applied before, reapply during this year because, again, as much medical assistance, as much related services that you can get for your children, at this point in time, may be helpful in making sure that their development, if it lags behind, gets caught up.

Some of those things do take place at Head Start, as well, right?

>> Yeah.

Because of the Health Services and the linking of families to medical homes, one of the major things that we try to ensure through health and through our Social Services area is to ensure that families that are eligible for Medicaid get that help, and within DHS, we are so lucky to have all those services in one building.

So, most likely, if a family is eligible and they may not have a medical assistance card, our Social Services are the first link and our health officials, they walk around and they help families to ensure that they meet the eligibility for medical assistance.

>> What are some of the other

supports for parents,
nutritional aspects, maybe?
>> Nutritional aspects --
Well, we link health and
nutrition together, more or
less, but we are able to provide
a lot of workshops and letting
parents how to utilize -- and
this is something through the
SNAP program that they also had
advocacy with, as well, is
basically letting a parent know
how to shop when they get their
benefits.
>> Okay.
>> Things that they should be
able to look for, how to
stretch that benefit to ensure
it includes healthier foods
versus a lot of those fast foods
or quick foods, microwavable
foods.
Those are things that we work
on, as well.
So families kind of have an
idea, basically, how they can
stretch their dollar and make
very healthy, nutritional --
What's the word I'm looking for?
>> Nutritional meals.
>> Choices! Yes, yes, yes.
>> Yeah, choices. Right.
Don't let your little ones twist
your arm and get those chocolate
cereal things.
>> Yeah.
They don't realize, a lot of
times when they're 3 and 4 and
they come into the classrooms
and you have those high amounts
of sugars, it can also turn into
something else, you know?
Attention.
They could have attention
deficits when they should be
able to be paying attention
because their sugar levels are
way higher.
>> Right.
>> Yeah.
>> I think we got a caller.
Good morning.

This is "Ability Radio."
>> Yes.
[Indistinct talking, feedback]
>> You dealt with the situation of providing programs after Maria, before, and during. So I do commend you all and I do appreciate what you all are doing. That's a very beautiful thing. Don't give up.
>> Thank you, sir.
Do you have a question?
>> A question in time.
How long is this gonna take?
>> How long is what gonna take?
>> This program. How long --
>> I didn't hear the last bit. You're sort of breaking up, sir.
>> I apologize.
How long is this program going to be established for?
>> Which program?
>> The program you all are talking about.
>> Okay, well, the Parent Conference is tomorrow.
>> Yes, and that is from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the UVI Sports and Fitness Center with registration starting at 9:00 AM.
>> Oh.
>> And Head Start has been in the Virgin Islands for over 50 years, so we plan to continue that, and you can register a child or a grandchild at our two locations.
We have one in the Knud Hansen Building, which is a Department of Human Services building from 8:00 to 3:00, and then we also have the Sugar Estate Building on 1st Avenue, and that's from 8:00 to 3:00.
So if you need to register a child, that can be done there, as well.
>> Wow. Incredible.
[Indistinct talking, feedback]
>> Okay, you're breaking up again.

I didn't hear the question.
>> Who founded the program?
>> Who founded the program?
>> The federal government, or
the Virgin Islands?
>> Oh!
The program?
Well, this is one of those
controversial programs that
50 years ago -- a lot of people
don't remember -- J. Edgar
Hoover, who was the FBI head
at that time, called it a "very
dangerous program."
>> Mm-hmm.
>> So we knew it was the right
way to go.
[Laughter]
>> Yeah.
>> So since 1969.
>> 1965.
>> '65, right?
>> Yeah.
>> It was started with the
federal government as part of a
development program for
childhood development issues
that came up during the 1950s.
>> Mm-hmm.
>> And then under initiatives
from John Fitzgerald Kennedy,
with the Department of Health
and Human Services, developed
this program.
The Virgin Islands picked it up
in...?
>> So, 1965, so it was like 53
years for them, and I think we
were right after, like a year
after.
We picked it up through the
initiative of Lyndon B. Johnson.
>> Yeah, so it's been in effect
for a while.
>> For a while, yeah.
>> A lot of people don't know
about it, but, again, it's a
very critical program for child
development, brain development,
and, again, the whole world is
in competition now with the
Internet and everything.

So it's education, education,
education is the key.
>> Mm-hmm.
>> Y'all do the best y'all can.
It's nice to hear about what
y'all are talking this morning.
>> Thank you.
>> May God bless everybody.
>> Thank you, sir.
>> Have a good one.
>> All right, have a good one.
Again, it's a very critical
program for children and for
parents to make sure that they
get that head start for their
child, get them involved.
>> Yeah.
>> And in line with what's going
on in the United States around
the world, it's getting involved
in science and technology and
design at a much earlier age.
>> A much earlier age.
>> Because, right now, if you
come to my office and you can't
sit down and work on a computer
and do an e-mail, I can't hire
you.
>> Yeah.
>> You know, it's the new
pencil, it's the new typewriter.
So some of these basic skills
that are involved in childhood
development come at a much
earlier age and carries them out
through their whole educational
career.
So, again, we appreciate your
comments, sir.
And we're gonna take a break and
get right back to "Ability
Radio -- You and Your Life."
>> Oh, yes, we can.
I know we can can.
Yes, we can can. Why can't we?
If we wanna get together, yes,
we can can.
I know we can make it work.
I know we can make it if we try.
Oh, yes, we can.
I know we can can.
Yes, we can.

Great gosh almighty.
Yes, we can.
I know we can can.
And we gotta take care of all
the children, the little
children.
Now's the time for all good men
to get together with one
another.
We got to iron out our problems
and iron out our quarrels and
try to live as brothers.
>> Welcome back to "Ability
Radio -- You and Your Life."
We're talking with the
Department of Education,
Department of Human Services,
and Head Start.
Ms. Lewis, Jerae Forde for
Parent Conference, and you've
called this the "no excuse"
conference for parents.
>> Yes.
>> And one of the things I saw
here, speaking of free -- gifts!
You're giving away gifts
tomorrow.
>> Yes!
So when you first come in, you
get a free tote bag so that you
can go around to all the
community organizations and pick
up all their gift giveaways.
Then we also have door prizes,
where you just attend and you
get some perfume to electronics,
and these are all compliments of
our sponsors.
And then you go to the different
community organizations, you get
your school supplies, and at the
end of the day, when you turn in
your evaluation, your child gets
a bookbag.
And I'm not talking any kind of
cheap-y bookbag.
This is a sturdy bookbag to last
you through the years.
So we have made sure that this
is a conference that parents
want to be at.
>> What about the transportation

piece?

You were saying that some parents don't want to drive all the way out west or they don't want to take the bus out there. What's available for them?

>> So, we have, from our sponsors again, we're going to have free transportation to and from Lockhart Elementary School. It's going to start at 9:00 and then there's going to be another drive-through for 9:30.

It's going to take you all the way to UVI, and after the conference, it's going to bring you right back to Lockhart School.

So those of you that maybe walk from the different neighborhoods to Lockhart, or if you just don't want to drive all the way west, we have free transportation for you.

>> And that calls for what, those who take the taxi vans, as well, right?

>> Yes. Oh, absolutely.

And so we're just trying to make it as easy as possible since we have changed our venue this year.

>> And they don't have to worry about lunch because you're giving away lunch, right?

>> Yes, and lunch is going to be catered.

It's gonna be absolutely fabulous.

Every year, they say the lunch gets better and better.

So we're gonna try and outdo ourselves.

>> Great. Great.

And as far as Head Start is concerned, what is the message you want to get out to the community?

First of all, fathers.

You got fathers back to taking their kids to school.

>> Take your kids to school the

first day, September 4th.
So, the message I want to
basically give to the listening
audience is that Head Start
works.
Period.
Exclamation mark.
[Laughter]
Head Start works. Period.
Exclamation and a smiley emoji
at the end of it.
[Laughter continues]
>> Got it all covered.
>> Yeah!
Head Start works.
It's been proven.
It's 50 years, basically.
We have them all private.
Congress is trying to make a lot
of their early childhood
programs really pattern off of
the Head Start and their whole
wraparound services for children
and the families.
It's not just about educating
the child, but it's ensuring
families are in the right place
to ensure that they're
self-sufficient, and it goes
beyond this program, taking
children out of poverty.
So even if it's looking at a
generational approach, just
because you start off in your
situation and you may be in
poverty doesn't mean that you
have to have a next generation
of poverty, as well.
So it's just ensuring that
families realize that there's
hope and that their children can
be educated with high quality
and they can get services that
they don't need to go to a
private school for.
You can get it for free within
Head Start.
Head Start was meant to really
enhance, to give those families
and disadvantaged children an
opportunity to learn and have a
high-quality education, and that

can be found in the Head Start programs.

>> Yeah, and, of course, one of the things is it helps parents prepare for the next 12 to 15 years of going to school. Because we weren't born parents, you know?

>> No.

>> We had to learn how to parent, and this is the best educational entree into doing and learning those first four or five years with the child through kindergarten, through Head Start.

>> Exactly.

>> Getting into the rhythm.

>> Exactly.

>> Really.

Getting them up, getting them going, and setting that example.

>> We have managers that are started with our program. They started as volunteers. Now they're managers.

>> Right.

>> We give such opportunities because before Head Start, the initiative started very grassroots.

Now we have over 2,000 federal compliances that we have to meet, our teachers have to be BA-certified, or AA-certified, or CDA-certified.

Management have to have degrees. Those are opportunities, and Head Start paid for a lot of those opportunities for our staff.

So it was not just having a degree.

Head Start was a part of building communities.

So you have so many teachers that are there now with BA degrees that have transitioned to even education because they've build that backbone on the Head Start dollar, on the Head Start funding.

So it's not just about children.
It's building communities.
So Head Start works.
Yay! [Laughs]
>> Yeah.
Grassroots education
establishment.
That's what J. Edgar Hoover was
afraid of.
[Laughter]
The grassroots.
>> Yep.
>> So, we're at that point where
we want to remind them about the
time of the conference tomorrow.
>> Yeah, so that's the parent
conference -- "Rebuilding
Together: An Educational
Journey" or Sunday, September
2nd.
That's tomorrow from 10:00 AM to
3:00 PM.
Registration starts at 9:00 AM
at the UVI Sports and Fitness
Center.
We have a lot of freebies, we
have transportation to and from
Lockhart School, and just before
we stop, I just want to thank
our sponsors, Office of the
Insular Superintendent, Office
of Senator Jean A. Forde,
Blessing the Children
Foundation, Christian Family
Center, North Carolina,
Community Resource Organizations
that are going to be there, and
the Future Business Leaders of
America.
>> All right.
Thank you, Ms. Lewis.
Thank you, Ms. Forde.
This has been "Ability Radio."
And, again, be there or be
square tomorrow, parents, and
make sure you fathers get out,
take your child to school on
that first day.
Be it Head Start, be it
Lockhart, be it...
[Laughter]
Take your child to school!

All righty, take care.
That's it for "Ability Radio."
>> I know we can make it.
I know that we can.