

PRESS RELEASE

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Education Receives Historic \$67M Investment for 2025-2026 School Year

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The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports officially opened the 2025–2026 academic year during the annual Professional Day ceremony, announcing a record \$67.4 million education budget with an additional \$1.8 million from an SAP and a bold vision for a future-focused, student-led transformation.

The Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports Honourable Sharie B. de Castro described the investment as the largest in the Territory's history, noting that it represents a \$11 million increase over last year's allocation. She reaffirmed the government's commitment to building strong, innovative learning environments, saying, "Education is not an expense, it is a savings account. Every dollar deposited is a seed sown." Emphasizing that this historic funding is laying the foundation for lasting progress.

As a result renovations and upgrades have been completed across Francis Lettsome, Enis Adams, Ebenezer Thomas, Joyce Samuel, and Alexandrina Maduro Primary Schools, while classrooms across the territory are now benefiting from air-conditioning, electrical upgrades, and enhanced safety systems.

The Minister also celebrated the upcoming opening of the Eslyn Henley Richiez Learning Centre on 8 September, calling it the first purpose-built special education school in the OECS region and a major milestone for exceptional learners across the territory. She also unveiled plans for a reimagined Althea Scatliffe Primary School, presenting designs that promise modern facilities tailored to support 21st-century learning.

A transformative milestone for tertiary education was also announced: H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC) is preparing to become a four-year degree-granting institution, beginning with education degrees, ensuring that teachers and students can pursue advanced learning without leaving the Territory.

This vision for a modernised, future-ready education system was echoed by guest speaker Jordan Dawson, a proud product of Elmore Stoutt High School and H. Lavity Stoutt Community College, who challenged educators to embrace intentional, student-centred teaching. "Teaching is not about you; it's about unlocking each student's unique potential. Be strategic, be intentional, and be

strong,” he urged, calling on teachers to make learning meaningful, relevant, and empowering.

Chief Education Officer Mrs. Orlandette Crabbe reinforced that message, reminding educators that the year’s theme, **“Full Steam Ahead: Future Focused, Student Led,”** is more than a slogan. “When we live this theme in our schools, we are not just teaching lessons, we are shaping leaders,” she said, celebrating the progress already visible in dual enrolment, improved exam results, and the growing confidence of students across the territory.

Following Professional Day, teachers completed a week of enriching sessions at the Summer Institute, where they sharpened skills, explored innovative practices, and collaborated to prepare for delivering high-quality instruction throughout the school year.

As the new school year begins, the Ministry reaffirmed its commitment to empowering educators with the tools, training, and support they need to ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed. With historic investments, modernized facilities, and a united vision for progress, the future of education in the Virgin Islands is brighter than ever.

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