GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Government Advances Major Education, Youth and Sports Transformation Agenda for 2026

Release Date: 19 January, 2026



The Government of the Virgin Islands has outlined a sweeping transformation agenda for education, youth development and sports in 2026, anchored in the Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports Honourable Sharie B. de Castro's recent Budget Debate in the House of Assembly and reinforced in the 2026 Speech from the Throne delivered by His Excellency the Governor, Daniel Pruce at the First Sitting of the Second Session of the Fifth House of Assembly.

In the Speech from the Throne, Government reaffirmed its commitment to building "a well-educated and highly-skilled population," supported by historic levels of investment and a focused legislative roadmap aimed at aligning policy and practice to deliver future-ready outcomes for students and communities across the Territory. The legislative agenda includes strengthening governance and accountability in education, expanding curriculum standards to cover S.T.E.A.M., digital literacy and national heritage, and reinforcing professional standards for educators.

These commitments build on a multi-year transformation already underway. During her 2026 Budget Debate, Minister de Castro emphasised that the progress now being seen is the result of deliberate, sustained investment rather than short-term intervention. "You can't get change if you give exact. But if you give more, you get change," the Minister told the House, noting that the transformation taking place "is not accidental, but the direct result of a government that chose not to give exact, but to give more."

That approach is reflected in the steady growth of the education budget. For 2026, the Budget Estimates allocate $77 million to education, representing a $20 million increase in just two budget cycles, or 35 percent growth. The Minister noted that this increase is not a temporary spike, but a structural shift in how education is resourced and governed, from basic maintenance to system building, capacity expansion and strategic reform.

As Government moves into the 2026 financial year, the focus shifts firmly to delivery. This next phase builds on works carried out across the school system throughout 2025, when multiple campuses underwent targeted rehabilitation, upgrades and improvements guided by the Ministry's phased approach to

infrastructure development.

In education infrastructure, 2026 will mark the start of a new generation of school development. Government is preparing to break ground on the redevelopment of the Althea Scatliffe Primary School, a modern, purpose-built institution intended to serve as a new regional standard for primary education, building on the model established by the recently completed Eslyn Henley Richiez Learning Centre. Speaking on the project, Minister de Castro said, “When we open that facility, I can guarantee our students will want to go to school. In fact, they will not want to go home.”

At the secondary level, plans will advance for the design and eventual construction of a purpose-built Technical Secondary School on the eastern end of Tortola, serving Grades 7 through 12 and expanding technical and vocational education aligned with the Territory’s workforce needs. The Minister noted that having capital approved early means “when schools close, we can immediately begin works.”

Tertiary education will also see major advancement in 2026, with Government progressing the transition of the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College toward four-year degree-granting status beginning with education programmes, with the first bachelor’s degrees potentially offered as early as Fall 2026. This will be supported by investments in digital infrastructure, workforce-aligned training and the design phase for student dormitories to support local, regional and international enrolment.

Minister de Castro described HLSCC as “a launchpad… where belief meets possibility, and where tomorrow begins today.” noting its central role in building the Territory’s skilled workforce. Plans are also moving forward to establish satellite campuses on Anegada and Jost Van Dyke, expanding access to tertiary education across the Virgin Islands.

Youth development and sports will see continued and expanded investment in 2026, following an increase of more than 300 percent in the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports’ budget since 2022, bringing funding to nearly $2.5 million. An additional $250,000 has been committed specifically for new youth programming developed in response to direct youth engagement, which the Minister described

as “what it looks like when youth participation moves from consultation to co-creation.” Government also intends to resurface the track at the A.O. Shirley Recreational Grounds in 2026.

Library services remain a pillar of lifelong learning, with $250,000 allocated in the 2026 budget for the design of a modern National Library to support digital learning, research, cultural preservation and community access.

Taken together, these initiatives reflect a coordinated approach in which legislative reform, capital investment and programme expansion are being advanced in parallel, as Government moves from planning to delivery and scales impact across education, youth development, tertiary education and sports.

For Additional Information Contact:

Ms. Angelique Lettsome
Information Officer I
Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports
Telephone: 1-284-468-9448/3190
Email: anlettsome@gov.vg