

## Early Care in the VI

### The Alert.

Birth to age 5 are the most critically important years for human development. High quality early care and education programs during these years greatly strengthen children's development and abilities.

However, there's an acute need here in the Virgin Islands for better early childcare programs -- and many more of them.

Far more children need out-of-home care than our current childcare programs can accommodate. Significantly, a large number of the VI childcare facilities now available are unable to offer high-quality early care and educational readiness to the children enrolled. This is due to inadequate finances, and lack of staff awareness of how young children can best develop their early social, emotional and learning skills.

Results show that our young VI children starting school are unprepared for kindergarten work.

### The Evidence. (See chart at right)

VI children's skills are tested early in their first year of public school. The standard annual assessment\* *Early Prevention of School Failure (EPSF)* has consistently shown that most incoming kindergarteners tested (almost 60%) have skills below age- or grade-level expectation in key areas:

in understanding what others are communicating (*ie receptive language*), and in recognizing differences and likenesses among learned shapes and objects (*ie visual discrimination*).

25% tested below age-level for *expressive language*, an ability to express words or ideas.

The high percentage of young children assessed with low skills for kindergarten learning should be a call to action in the VI community.

### The Challenge - to improve children's early care.

Childcare programs vary widely, from passive custodial care -- to responsive and engaging **high-quality** care providing children with rich, growth-promoting experiences. This **high-quality early care** actively strengthens young children's social and emotional development, and encourages their early language and cognitive skills. Characteristics of **high-quality early care and education** programs include safe and stimulating environments, educated, experienced caregivers in nurturing, dependable relationships with children, and fewer children per adult care provider. **High quality early learning** also influences children's long-term success. Studies show that young children receiving highly supportive and engaging early childhood care and education come to school more ready to learn than others. Over time, these children have a higher rate of success in school, workforce readiness, job productivity, economic security and community engagement.

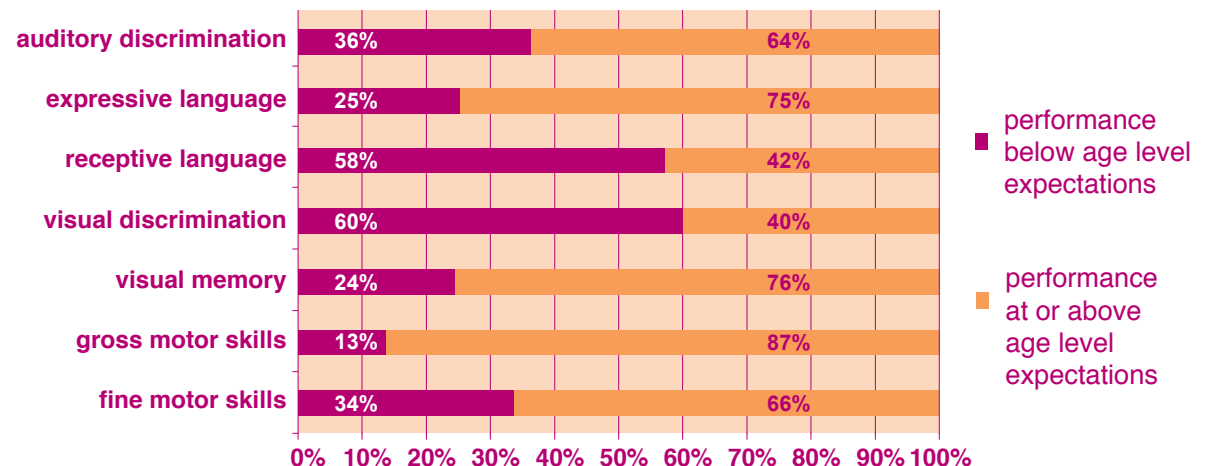
At The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI), we are committed to helping provide the best foundation for our children's success, by enhancing the early learning environment.

**The Family Connection (TFC)** is CFVI's initiative to create and foster exemplary programs and practices that provide **high quality early care services**, and promote family and childcare provider support and skills enhancement.

By working with parents, childcare professionals and the larger community to ensure excellence in the early childhood years, we aim to reduce and eventually eliminate the number of dropouts and detached youth (pages 30-33), and make meaningful improvements to reduce other risks to our children and families.

\* The EPSF 2008 assessment measured kindergarteners in St. Thomas/St. John. St. Croix kindergarteners have been measured by an alternate assessment tool, which has not been consistently used in recent years.

### What is the EPSF Assessment of STT-STJ Public Kindergarten Students' Proficiency, 2008-2009?



## Early Care in the VI, cont.

### What's the situation in the US Virgin Islands?

#### The need for basic, licensed childcare.

- In 2008, there were 8,830 children age birth to 5<sup>1</sup>, of which an estimated 69%<sup>2</sup> (or 6,100) had all custodial parents in the workforce, (ie. were in need of childcare).
- Of these, 3,823 children were enrolled in licensed childcare programs, including
  - 930 children in [public] Early Head Start and Head Start programs
  - 2,893 children in licensed private childcare programs (with 114 VI licensed centers available).

#### Need for VI Licensed Childcare Programs

	St. Croix	St. Thomas/St. John	VI TOTAL
# Children age birth through preschool (ie. 0-5 years)	—	—	8830 <sup>1</sup>
# Children enrolled in Early Head Start (0-3 years)	36	(not offered)	36
# Children enrolled in Head Start (3-5 years)	464	430	894*
# Children enrolled in private licensed childcare (0-5 years)	1061 <sup>3</sup>	1832 <sup>3</sup>	2893
Estimated # Children 0-5 years not in licensed care	—	—	<b>5007</b>

\*400 additional, eligible children were on the waiting list for Head Start

<sup>1</sup>Estimated number of children born in the USVI from 1/1/05 to 12/31/09. The kindergarten cut-off for the USVI is December 31st. As final numbers were not yet available for 2009 births at print-time, this number was calculated based on an average of the previous 4 years.

<sup>2</sup> USVI Census 2000

<sup>3</sup> This number does not include those enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, or licensed kindergarten programs and represents an estimate based on a recent survey of enrollments.

#### The need for affordable childcare.

Childcare needs to be affordable. Affordable childcare is a vital requirement for parental (especially maternal) employment, for family economic self-sufficiency and for the stability and continued growth of the VI economy.

Childcare center quality relies on adequate funding – especially for the key elements of center safety, well-qualified caregivers/teachers and small group size.

Most VI parents cannot afford a high-quality childcare program, or even a 'basic' high-quality childcare program which meets the minimum of health and safety requirements (*for the costs, see chart below*).

In 2009, the VI Department of Human Services provided childcare subsidies to low-income parents who were working, or attending school or training programs. Based on the 'average cost' of childcare in the territory (see below), these subsidies provided a maximum of \$300/month (or \$3,600 for a full 12-month year). In 2009, 1,186 children in 575 families received childcare subsidies -- still far short of need.

According to a 2010 independent study, the estimated cost of high-quality childcare for 185 days (9 months) per year is \$13,649. Basic childcare which meets the minimum VI health and safety requirements is estimated to cost \$7,887 for the same period. The average cost of VI childcare program is \$2,700 (*see chart below*).

#### Cost of VI Childcare Programs, 2009

	Maximum High-Quality Program	Basic High-Quality Program	Average Cost or VI Childcare Program
Childcare Center cost for one child's care, assuming a 9-hour day for 185 days/year (9 mo.)	\$13,649	\$7,887	\$2,700

While costs of **high-quality childcare** can be high, research shows these costs are outweighed by long-term benefits – to the child and the community served.

## 2008-2009 Territorial Report Card for Public Schools

The *Virgin Islands Territorial Assessment of Learning (VITAL)* is the annual measurement report used by the VI Department of Education -- in compliance with the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* -- to assess student and school performance.

The *VITAL* report measures VI public school students' progress toward proficiency in reading and math. *VITAL* also charts attendance rates and participation of enrolled public school students, and the qualifications of public school teachers.

### **VITAL benchmarks for performance.**

*VITAL* benchmarks for "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) are set at the following main criteria:

- **school participation** at 95%
  - **student attendance rate** at 95%
  - specific percentages of **students to be scoring at or above proficiency** in reading and math, ie:
    - **5th grade reading:** 39.2% of students to be at/ above proficiency (*ie. reading at expected grade level*)
    - **7th grade reading:** 34.4% of students to be at/ above proficiency
    - **11th grade reading:** 40.8% of students to be at/ above proficiency
    - **5th grade math:** 34.4% of students to be at/ above proficiency
    - **7th grade math:** 44% of students to be at/ above proficiency
    - **11th grade math:** 36% of students to be at/ above proficiency
- (See next page, "*VI Student Academic Performance, 2008-09*," for VI students' results).

### **What are the student and school performance ratings in the US Virgin Islands?**

The following are the VI Department of Education's own assessments of their *VITAL* "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) for 2008-09 student and school performance.

### **Student performance. Grades 3-8.**

Overall, most targets were met for students, though not met consistently for all subgroups.

- In **reading**, black students met the participation, attendance and proficiency targets. However, students with limited English, Hispanic students, and students with disabilities met participation targets in reading, but did not meet attendance or proficiency targets.
- In **math**, participation targets were met overall. Attendance targets were met by all except students with limited English, Hispanic students and students with disabilities. Proficiency targets were met by all students except those with disabilities.

### **Grade 11.**

Overall, AYP targets were not met.

- In **reading**, attendance targets were met by students overall. Participation targets were not met by students with limited English, Hispanic students and students with disabilities. Proficiency targets were not met by any group.
  - In **math**, attendance targets were met by students overall. Participation and proficiency targets were not met by Hispanic students and students with disabilities.
- (See "*VI Student Academic Performance*," next page).

### **School performance.**

#### **Elementary schools (K-6).**

14 out of 23 elementary schools (up from 4 in 2007) met AYP targets for teaching and learning.

- **St. Croix:** 4 of 10 (ie. 40%) of St. Croix's elementary schools met AYP targets for both reading and math
- **St. Thomas/St. John:** 10 of 13 (ie. 77%) of this district's elementary schools met AYP targets in both reading and math.

#### **Middle/junior high schools (grades 6/7-8).**

- None of the 6 middle/junior high schools in **St. Croix** or **St. Thomas** met AYP targets (down from 1 last year).

#### **High schools (grades 9-12).**

- 3 of the 4 high schools met AYP targets in math. No high school met targets in reading.
- **St. Croix:** 1 of 2 schools met AYP targets in math. Neither met reading targets.
  - **St. Thomas/St. John:** 2 of 2 schools met AYP math targets; neither met reading targets.

### **Teacher qualifications.**

- 44.8% of core classes (up from 11.5% the previous year) were taught by a teacher held as 'highly qualified,' based on requirements including bachelor's-degree education, state certification and subject matter competency standards adopted by the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* and the Board of Education.\*
- In the VI, 55.8% of public school teachers were certified; 57.1% had a bachelor's degree, while 37.5% had a master's degree.

\*A "highly qualified teacher" as defined by *NCLB* and US Virgin Islands Board of Education is one who:

- has a full state certification
- holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree
- has demonstrated subject matter competency in each core academic subject(s) he or she teaches (ie. English, Math, Science, Foreign Languages, Civics and Government, Economics, Arts, History, and Geography).

## 2008-2009 Report Card, cont.

### VI student academic performance, 2008-2009

#### Student academic proficiency.

A VITAL rating of **advanced** indicates “exceeding grade level expectations.”

A VITAL rating of **proficient** indicates “academic performance meeting grade level expectations.”

A VITAL rating of **basic** indicates “approaching grade level expectations.”

A VITAL rating of **below basic** indicates “falling below grade level expectations.”

#### For Grade 5 reading proficiency:

Advanced level: 10.5% of students  
 Proficient level: 32.3%... (target: 39.2%)  
 Basic level: 50.0%  
 Below basic: 7.3%

#### For Grade 7 reading proficiency:

Advanced level: 3.1%  
 Proficient level: 17.5%... (target: 34.4%)  
 Basic level: 66.7%  
 Below basic: 12.6%

#### For Grade 11 reading proficiency:

Advanced level: 3.0%  
 Proficient level: 26.8%... (target: 40.8%)  
 Basic level: 48.6%  
 Below basic: 21.6%

#### For Grade 5 math proficiency:

Advanced level: 19.1%  
 Proficient level: 33.3%... (target: 34.4%)  
 Basic level: 43.7%  
 Below basic: 3.9%

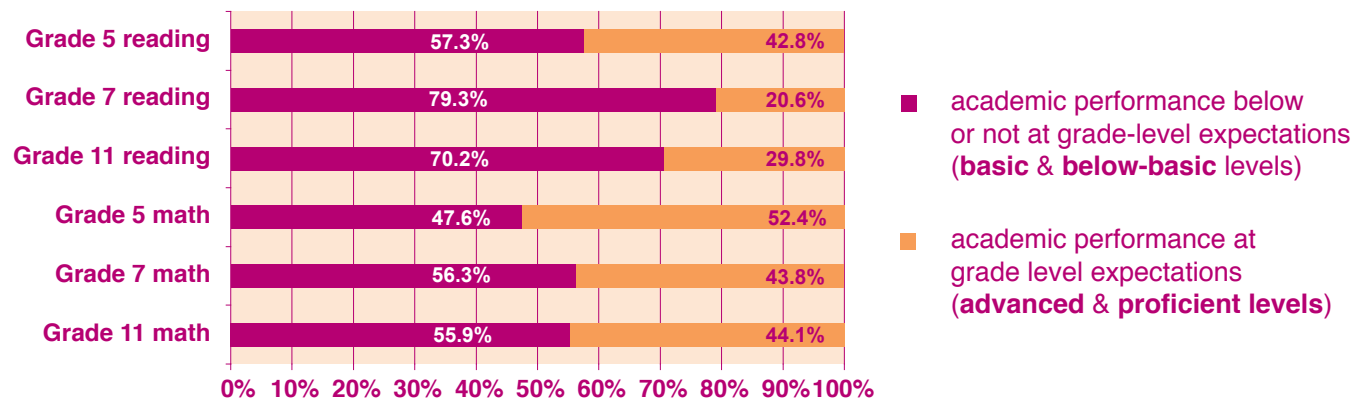
#### For Grade 7 math proficiency:

Advanced level: 3.3%  
 Proficient level: 40.5%... (target: 44%)  
 Basic level: 53%  
 Below basic: 3.3%

#### For Grade 11 math proficiency:

Advanced level: 8.5%  
 Proficient level: 35.6%... (target: 36%)  
 Basic level: 55.2%  
 Below basic: 0.7%

### What is the VI Territorial Assessment of Learning (VITAL) Student Academic Performance Report for 2008-2009?



## Public School Dropouts

### What's the situation in the US Virgin Islands?

#### VI public high schools (grades 9-12).

- 10.2% of VI teens age 16-19 (650 teens) were high school dropouts in 2008-09, as estimated by **USVI KIDS COUNT** (based on data from VI Dept. of Education and the *VI Community Survey*).
- 206 fewer teens were estimated to be high school dropouts in 2008-09 than in the previous year (in 2007-08, there were 856 estimated dropouts).

### What is the national dropout rate?

- An estimated 6% of US teens age 16-19<sup>1</sup>

*Note: Data following is solely from VI Dept. of Education. Rates and numbers reported are for VI public school students, not youth in private or parochial schools, or youth not in school.*

#### VI public secondary schools (grades 7-12)\*.

- 5.35% (423 students) were reported to be dropouts (down from 5.85%, or 462 students, in 2007-08)
- Twice as many males as females (286 vs. 137)
- **St. Croix:** 185 students represent a 4.6% district dropout rate (or 44% of the 423 public secondary school dropouts reported).

- **St. Thomas/St. John:** 238 students represent a 6.2% district dropout rate (or 56% of the 423 public secondary school dropouts reported).

#### VI public junior high schools (grades 7-8).

1.3% of enrolled junior high school students were reported as dropouts.

- 0.6% of enrolled 7th grade students (or 9 students).
- 2.2% of enrolled 8th grade students (or 27 students).

#### VI public high schools (grades 9-12).

- 10.4% of enrolled 9th grade students (or 196 students)
- 6.8% of enrolled 10th grade students (or 80 students)
- 5.6% of enrolled 11th grade students (62 students)
- 5.1% of enrolled 12th grade students (49 students)

### VI teen dropouts ages 16-19 (Percent)

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
17%	16%	11%	n/a	11%	15.7%	13.8%	13.1%	10.2%

Data Source: Virgin Islands Department of Education

Find this chart and additional year-by-year data charts for VI Dropouts at the Kids Count Data Center website [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org):

- Secondary public school dropouts (percent)
- Years/grades of highest dropout risk (number, percent)

\* The VI Department of Education reports the number of dropouts age 16-19 in 2008-09 as 343 students.

**USVI KIDS COUNT** also includes *VI Community Survey* data on teens age 16-19 who report no longer being enrolled in school, having attained less than the 6th or the 9th grade.

<sup>1</sup>[www.kidscount.org](http://www.kidscount.org)

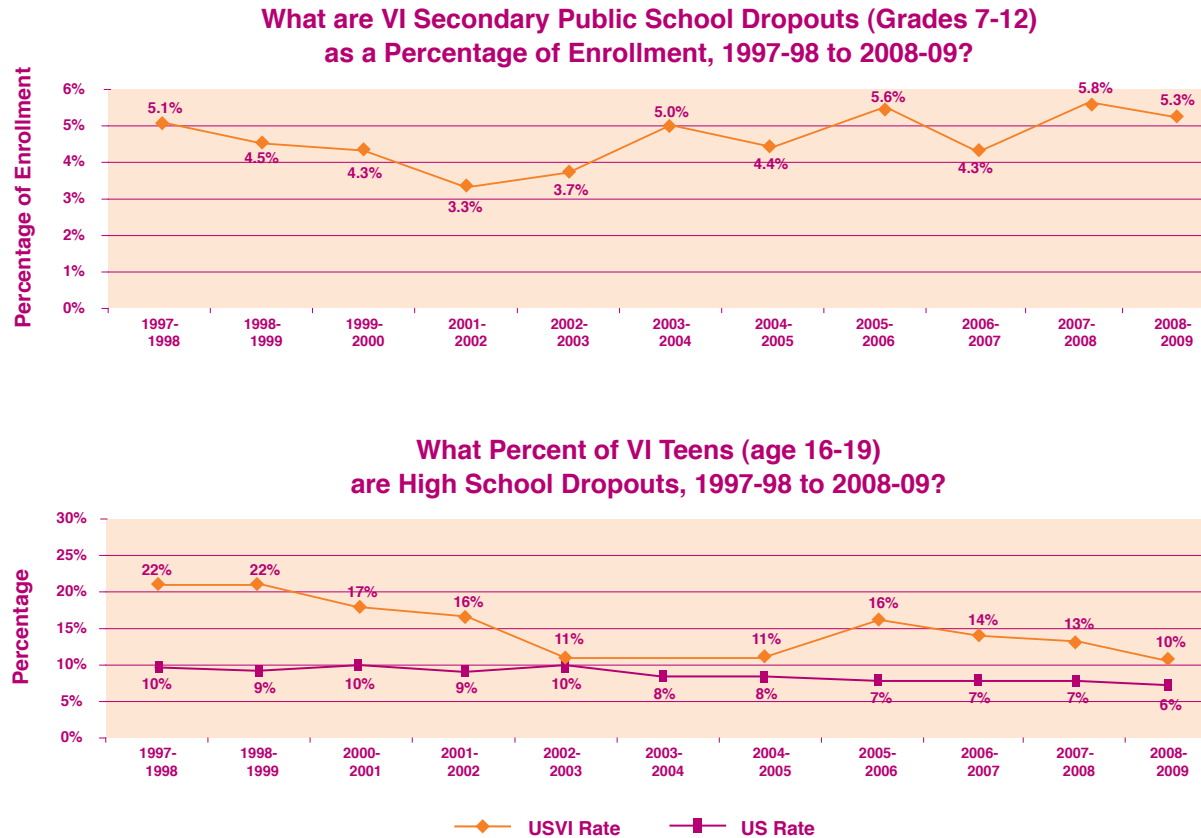
*Definition: **Teen high school dropouts** is the percentage of teenagers between ages 16 and 19 who are not enrolled in school and are not high school graduates. Definition: **Public secondary school dropouts** is the percentage of children enrolled in public schools in 7th to 12th grades inclusively who did not report for class at the beginning of the school year, graduate or meet the exclusionary conditions of transfer to another school, suspension, illness or death in the new school year.*



# 650

VI teens age 16-19 were dropouts

## Public School Dropouts, cont.



## Detached Youth, Employed Youth

### What's the situation in the US Virgin Islands?

- The 6,398 youth who were age 16-19 in 2008 (119 less than in the previous year) represented more than one-fifth of the VI child/youth population.
- 15.2% of all 16-19 year olds in the Virgin Islands — 975 youth — were not attending school and not working, down from 17% the previous year.

### What's the 'detached' youth rate in the nation?

- 9%<sup>1</sup>

### Employment attainment, age 16-19.

- 5% of this age group (or 296 youth) reported working full-time in 2008 (down from 6% or 410 youth in '07).
- The unemployment rate for youth who were looking for work increased to 36% in 2008 (from 30.6% in 2007). This 2008 rate is almost 9 times the 4.2% rate of adult unemployment.

### Educational attainment, age 18-19.

- Of the 2,744 VI youth age 18-19 in 2008, 47% (almost half or 1,297 youth) reportedly lacked a high-school diploma (down from 58% in 2007).

### Educational attainment for older youth, age 18-24.

- Of the 8,438 youth age 18-24 (68 fewer than in 2007), 72% had completed high school by 2008 (up from 63% in 2007); 28% had not.
- Female rates of high school completion rose to 79.4% (from 62.7% in 2007).
- Of high school graduates age 18-24, 5.2% earned a bachelor's degree or above by 2008 (up from 4.6% in '07).
- Female rates of college completion increased to 6.8% (from 3.5% in 2007).

### Employment attainment for older youth, age 18-24.

- 62.9% of youth age 18-24 (or 5,309 youth) were employed (up from 55.7% in '07).
- Female employment rate increased to 57.2% (up from 50.4% in 2007).
- Of employed youth, 48% worked full-time, at least 40 hours a week (down from 58.5% in 2007).
- Of full-time employed youth, 84.9% had a high school diploma or above (up from 72.2% in 2007).
- Of unemployed youth age 18-24, 64.3% reported having completed high school or above (62% in '07).
- The unemployment rate was 25.7% for all youth age 18-24 (up from 13.4% in 2007).

*Definition: **Teens not in school and not working** is the percentage of teenagers between ages 16 and 19 who are not enrolled in school and not employed. Employment may include part-time or full-time work.*

<sup>1</sup>[www.kidscount.org](http://www.kidscount.org)

### Detached Youth Numbers and Portion in the VI Youth Population

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
number of all VI youth age 16-19	6,398	6,517	6,128	6,985	6,713
number of 'detached youth' age 16-19 (not enrolled or employed)	1,225	1,107	692	935	974
% of detached youth within all VI youth age 16-19	15.2%	17.0%	11.3%	13.4%	14.5%

*Note: By accessing figures for youth age 16-19 who reported in the VI Community Survey (VICS) tables having attained some college, and youth 16-19 who reported some employment (but are not in the work force), KIDS COUNT is now able to document a smaller number of detached youth in the VI youth population than previously expected. Our improved formula revises and updates rates for detached youth published in KIDS COUNT for years '06 and '05. Data from '04 and before is unchanged.*

## Detached Youth, Employed Youth, cont.

### VI youth educational attainment, ages 18-24 (Percent)

Education	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	3.8%	6.9%	5.6%	6.1%	4.3%	3.8%	4.6%	5.2%
<b>High school diploma or higher</b>	64.5%	69%	64.1%	64.1%	51.5%	66%	63.1%	72.2%

Data Source: Virgin Islands Community Survey, Eastern Caribbean Center, University of the Virgin Islands. Table 1-9

Find this chart, and additional year-by-year data charts for VI Detached Youth topics at the Kids Count Data Center website [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org):

- Teens age 16-19 not in school and not working (percent)
- Teens age 16-19 employed full-time (percent)
- Unemployed teens age 16-19 (percent)

