

# ***Strong futures have strong beginnings***



## **VIDE Parent Handbook** **Preschool to Grade 3**





# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Learning From Home .....	3
Time and Space for Learning.....	4
Supporting a Child with Disabilities.....	5
Supporting English Language Learners.....	6
Parent Responsibilities and Expectations.....	7
Social and Emotional Wellbeing.....	8
Managing Behavior.....	9
Communication with School and Teachers.....	10
Getting Involved.....	11
Helping Your Child.....	12
Preparing for Diagnostic Tests.....	13
Notes.....	14
References.....	15





THE VIRGIN ISLANDS  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Racquel Berry-Benjamin  
Commissioner

Maine  
1834 Kongens Gade, Charlotte Amalie  
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00802-6746  
Tel: 340/ 774-0100

St. Croix:  
2133 Hospital Street, Christiansted  
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00820-4665  
Tel: 340/ 773-1095



## LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Dear Early Childhood Parent/Guardian:

It is with great enthusiasm that I welcome you on this exciting journey of educating your preschooler. Thank you for entrusting the Virgin Islands Department of Education with being a part of the most critical years of your child's educational experience.

The first years of schooling sets the foundation for a lifetime of knowledge acquisition for children. During these years, children learn the reading and math skills needed to succeed in all other subject areas. They will also continue to build upon these skills for the rest of their lives. Like a house, your child will be as strong as his foundation; let's build that strong foundation together!

Parents are our most valued partners. We will collaborate with you to create the best outcomes for your child. We need you to support your child's learning by making your home an extension of our classroom. Our passionate and committed early childhood educators will provide a nurturing and supportive environment in which your child's social, cultural, physical, emotional and academic skills will flourish. We believe that addressing the needs of the whole child will create self-motivated, lifelong learners with bright and promising futures.

I wish you and your young learner a safe and productive year, full of rich and unforgettable learning experiences. I encourage you to communicate regularly with your child's teachers and take an active role in his/her education. You are a part of the team that will ensure your child's success.

Have a transformational year!

Racquel Berry-Benjamin  
Commissioner



# Introduction

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE), along with community stakeholders, have collaborated to design this reference tool, *The Parent Handbook*, to support parents for the safe reopening of schools as we embark on a virtual learning environment during the 2020-2021 school year. The resource is a reflection of feedback shared by stakeholders and has been compiled into a reader-friendly document for ongoing support and guidance.

It is important for the VIDE to begin the school year focusing on how we can best meet the needs of our parents and students, collectively. In our efforts to do so, this handbook contains several tips and strategies on how to assist your child's academic, social and emotional growth. It also outlines the responsibilities, expectations, and roles of parents, teachers, and students. Our hope is that the handbook provides all parents with essential information that will create a successful learning environment for all.

In addition to addressing students' instructional and emotional needs, we have also included information on the following:

- Creating time and space for your child to learn at home
- Learning at home through virtual instruction
- Managing behavior
- Communicating with schools
- Accessing assistance from the school/district
- Preparing your child for diagnostic assessments
- Becoming involved in school activities

As we provide opportunities for student success, let us continue to open doors with an open-minded approach to learning.

The Virgin Islands Department of Education would like to commend our parents for their willingness and dedication as we work together to equip our students with the college and career readiness skills needed to be globally competitive in the real world.





# Learning from Home

Children in grades pre-kindergarten to the third grade learn best when they are active and engaged. Learning should be creative and experiential, keeping children in motion as physical activity is essential for children's concentration and interactions with others.

Parents, your child's time at home with distance learning is not going to look like or be structured like "regular" school days. As the schools adjust to the "new normal," you can support your child's learning with the following suggested tips and strategies:

## **Set expectations before you begin digital activities with your children about why they are using the device and for how long, establishing safe media routines:**

- Set up parental controls through your internet provider or the device's operating system
- Set up a space at home where children can use the devices safely in areas where two or more can share
- Collect the devices at night and charge them in a secure location
- Set clear expectations letting your child know that you will be checking online activities

## **Develop positive technology habits:**

- Children should sit in chairs allowing their feet to touch the floor; the monitor and screen should be placed at eye-level
- Teach your child the 20-20-20 Rule. To prevent eye strain, take a break every 20 minutes. Look at an object approximately 20 feet away for 20 seconds
- Set screen-free time during the day

## **Balance online learning with other activities:**

- Engage in physical activity; spend time outdoors participating in activities such as; jumping jacks, dancing, Simon Says, daily walks, and scavenger hunts
- Encourage imaginative and dramatic play. For example, ask children to design and create their own grocery store, restaurant or other culturally relevant place
- Let children build and create with blocks, LEGO sets, cardboard boxes, etc.

## **Support oral language and vocabulary development:**

- Talk with and listen to your child
- Talk to your child as you read books together! Ask questions (who? what? where? when? why? and how?), for example, "What was your favorite part of the story?"
- Get excited if your child asks what a word means! Tell your child that it is great to ask questions about unknown words
- Write with your child to develop oral language and vocabulary

## **Support math throughout the day:**

- Embed math in everyday routines; use laundry to promote matching and sorting; make comparisons and count everything
- Create a math-rich environment; post telephone numbers, use recipes
- Play games to teach math concepts; "I spy the number (shape, color, etc.)"



# Time and Space for Learning

## Recommended Environmental Needs for Virtual Learning:

Creating a learning environment at home for children is as important as what they will learn. To increase opportunities for your child to be successful, designing a special distance learning environment must include the following:

### The learning space must be:

- Quiet
- Well lit
- Comfortable
- Free from daily distractions
- Equipped with charging area for device(s)

### Parents should:

- Set daily routines for instruction (ex. gathering of instructional materials)
- Create a daily visible schedule for guidance
- Create a password listing (if needed) for easy login access
- Discuss expectations with your child (ex. appropriate behaviors during distance learning)
- Have your child complete activities as you provide support and encouragement
- Create a nurturing environment (ex. give feedback in a non-threatening manner)
- Maintain communication with your child's teacher to discuss progress





# Supporting a Child with a Disability

## Parent Preparation for IEP Meetings

- A Special Education professional (teacher or speech-language pathologist) will contact you to arrange your meeting
- Confirm your meeting OR contact your Special Education Professional, if you need to reschedule
- Review your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) draft, write down questions/concerns and come prepared to discuss with the rest of your child's IEP Team.
- Your child's IEP can only be changed in an IEP Team Meeting; an IEP is a working document which can always be addressed
- During school closures, parent contacts will be made via telephone and email. IEP Meetings will be held via telephone or video conference platform following the same legal timelines and guidelines

## Studying Tips for Different Types of Learners

- Tips for visual learners – Learn by Seeing
  - Use books, videos, computers, visual aids, and flashcards
  - Make detailed, color-coded or high-lighted worksheets
  - Use colorful pictures, word associations, and verbal repetition to memorize
  - Ask lots of questions
- Tips for auditory learners – Learn by Listening
  - Read materials out loud
  - Use pictures, word associations, and verbal repetition to memorize
  - Study with other students; talk things through
  - Listen to books on tape or other audio recordings
  - Use a tape recorder to listen to class session again later
  - Ask lots of questions
- Tips for kinesthetic learners – Learn by Doing
  - Get hands on. Do experiments. Take field trips
  - Use activity-based study tools, such as role-playing or model building
  - Use memory games and flash cards
  - Use music, actions and movement in learning
  - Ask lots of questions

**Are you concerned about your child's development?** To assist your children who you may suspect to have a disability and may be in need of special education (even though they are advancing from grade to grade, are highly mobile, and/or are migrant children), you can contact the teacher(s), school counselor, or the District Offices of Special Education for further assistance.

All services provided by the Local Education agencies (LEA-school districts) through IDEA 2004 (PART B) Special Education and Related Services (PART B) are at no cost to the individual or parents.

If you are concerned about your child's learning and need help referring your child, please contact the VIDE at (340)774-0100 (STTJ District) or (340)626-8615; or (340)773-1095 (STX District).



# Supporting English Language Learners

Your Pre-K – 3rd grade English learners will build new skills to acquire language proficiency in English. Learning and acquiring another language for your child may not be easy. Your child will need your support along the way; so, here are some strategies to help you:

- Helping your child with homework
  - Provide your child with a place to do homework
  - Check that the homework has been completed every night
  - Stay in contact with the teacher about the homework
  - Ask the teacher about any question your child may have
- Attendance is important. Ensure that your child actively participates daily.
- Let the school know in what language you want the school communication to be sent to you.
- Read to your child even in your native language.
- Establish a time to use i-Ready at home.
- Attend school meetings.
- Tell your child not to be afraid to learn another language.
- Do not punish your child for not being fluent in English.





# Parent Responsibilities and Expectations

Parents are a child's first teacher, role model, and friend. On this educational journey, remember every triumph is your own and every failure is a lesson learned for growth.

- Ensure that your child is logged in and attends all classes and class activities promptly and regularly
- Provide the resources needed to complete all class assignments
- Ensure that your child is well-groomed dressed for all digital classroom activities
- Ensure that behavior is reasonable when digital group activities occur and conform to the standards of behavior regulated in a physical classroom
- Keep regular communication with the school concerning progress through the approved mediums
- Maintain a safe, clean, and quiet environment for your child to engage fully in classroom activities and completing assignments
- Maintain current contact information such as home, work, and alternate telephone numbers as well as emails for proper communication between home and school
- Assist in completing all assignments and academic standards by discussing homework, classwork and assessments with your child and provide extra tutoring as needed
- Ensure that your child is well rested and fully alert for all classroom activities and assignments
- Regularly check on your child during the digital learning process to ensure directed attention and focus on the class
- Bring any problems that may hinder well-being or academic progress (examples: illnesses, behavioral problems, technical issues) to the teacher's attention
- Attend and participate in all virtual parent meetings and school sponsored events
- Motivate and encourage your child through incentives, praises, and modeling excitement for learning



# Social and Emotional Wellbeing

## Supporting Social-Emotional Development

When our young children head off for school, they are taking steps toward a lifelong journey of learning. Not only will they begin to build foundational skills that will pave the way for academic success, they will also learn social-emotional skills that will contribute to their overall success in life. Allow your child to participate in activities and routines that help young children learn new social-emotional skills or practice existing skills in fun, stimulating, and supportive environments. This is important in developing your child's abilities in the following areas:

- **Self-Concept and Self Awareness** – Your child recognizes himself/herself as a unique individual having his/her own abilities, characteristics, feelings and interests
- **Self-Regulation** – Your child manages responses to his/her needs, feelings and events
- **Relationships with Others** – Your child demonstrates and continues to develop positive relationships with important peers and adults, and demonstrates pro-social problem-solving skills in social interactions
- **Accountability** – Your child understands and follows routines and rules
- **Adaptability** – Your child adjusts to change

Families can support social emotional development at home and on the go every day.





# Managing Behavior

Proactively manage behavior with effective practices

## **Ensure your child prepares for assignments and assessments**

- When completing assignments and studying for tests, well written class notes serve as an efficient, accurate way of obtaining information to complete assignments and study for tests.
- Having a designated assignment book trains children to be organized.

## **Encourage adherence to deadlines.**

- All assignments must be submitted on time. Setting and adhering to deadlines to complete projects and assignments helps students stay on task and practice responsibility.

## **Offer positive reinforcement for accomplishing tasks on a regular basis.**

- School work takes priority over leisure activities. Reward children who stay on task, complete assignments on time, and make passing grades with whatever activity they enjoy. For example, after completing the math assignment, a child may be permitted to play an educational video game for 30 minutes or help create a favorite dish for a meal.
- Praise your children for doing well. They will see that you value their effort.
- Discipline is not to be used to express your anger, but rather to redirect and encourage a desire for positive change. Using profanity, derogatory, and condemning language generally serves to discourage children and make them feel incapable of success.

## **Have a positive attitude in order to set a good example and motivate your child.**

- Learning is generally an exciting adventure; however, sometimes it can seem tedious and difficult. Maintaining a positive attitude about the process motivates students to produce work and be successful.
- Children tend to imitate parents and reflect attitudes and behaviors displayed at home. Positive words and behaviors about school show your child that you value learning as it will help him or her achieve goals.
- Do not be afraid to ask us for help or advice. Your child is the top priority, and the faculty and staff at the VIDE are happy to be of assistance, whenever possible.



# Communicating with School and Teacher

## Communication Tips for Parents:

- Stay connected with the school by exchanging full names and updated contact information with the teacher such as email, a reliable telephone number, or an agreed upon communication app

### Virgin Islands Department of Education Email

Format: FirstName.LastName@vide.vi

Example: **jane.doe@vide.vi**

- Stay connected with any updates or important information from the Virgin Islands Department of Education through the Department's website, [www.vide.vi](http://www.vide.vi), or through social media. Note: Individual schools and programs may have their own social media pages.

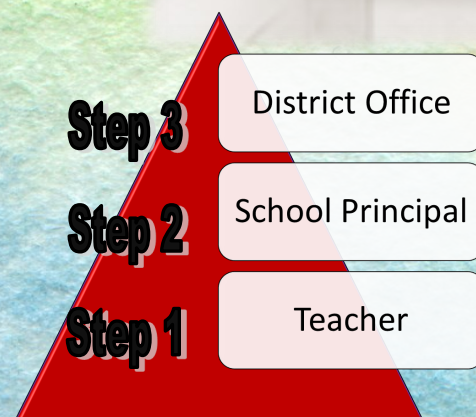
 [FACEBOOK.COM/USVI.VIDE](https://www.facebook.com/USVI.VIDE)

 [@VIDEDUCATION1](https://twitter.com/VIDEDUCATION1)

 [@VIDEDUCATION](https://www.instagram.com/VIDEDUCATION)

 [VIDEDUCATION](https://www.pinterest.com/VIDEDUCATION)

- Listen to the radio for any school related information via public service announcements, district sponsored radio programs, or interviews with our education leaders.
- For parent concerns, please follow the hierarchy of complaints by first contacting the teacher through verbal or written communication. It is preferred that you call the school's office to make an appointment to have a conference with the teacher. If the problem is not resolved with the teacher, speak or write to the school principal. Finally, as a last resort, request an appointment with your District office.
- Stay connected with all the fun and exciting aspects of education. The VIDE is committed to making our "new normal" a success for both parents and students.





# Getting Involved

- Turn an area of your home into a classroom setting with books, a desk, and school supplies
- Attend and participate in any virtual school sponsored event
- Start a class parent support group through social media, or messaging services
- Monitor the digital classroom and quiz your child after class
- Make a calendar or appointment schedule with the teacher to discuss student progress
- Make a time table or schedule for logging in, doing homework, reviewing schoolwork and reading for fun as a family
- Familiarize and play around with the medium used for virtual learning





# Helping Your Child

Do it with them, not for them

Parents take great pride in their children's academic performance. We all want our children to do well. However, there are a few things that you should remember:

- Children learn by doing. The more they practice a skill, the better they become. They *will* get it!
- Children need to take ownership for their learning. You, along with the teacher, support the learning process; you *are not* responsible for learning. As owners of the process, your children *will* get it done (with your support).
- Don't put too much value on grades. Instead, focus on the skills that your children are learning. Are they getting it? Do they need more help? If so, get them extra help so that they gain the skills.
- Learning challenges make stronger students. Challenged children build determination and commitment skills that will benefit other areas of their lives for years to come.

Remember to help your child understand the lesson; students will not learn if the work is done for them. Thank you for supporting your child's learning process!





# Preparing for Diagnostic Tests

## Why Test?

Tests are like a regular check-up with the doctor. The results tell schools where students are, courses that need to be strengthened, and teaching techniques that should be improved. Some tests compare students by grade level, school, and district. All tests determine how well your child is doing, and that is very important.

## Do's and Don'ts

You can assist your children by following these tips to prepare them to do their best:

- Always encourage children. Praise them for the things they do well. If they feel good about themselves, they will perform to their greatest potential. Children who are afraid of failing are more likely to become anxious when taking tests and more likely to make mistakes.
- Do not judge your child based on a single test score. Test scores are not perfect measures of what a child can do. There are many other factors that might influence a test score. For example, a child can be affected by the way he or she is feeling, the setting in the classroom, and the attitude of the teacher. Remember, also, that one test is simply one test.
- Meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss his/her progress. Ask the teacher to suggest activities for you and your child to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's understanding of schoolwork. Parents and teachers should work together to benefit students.
- Make sure your child attends school regularly. Remember, tests do reflect children's overall achievement. The more effort and energy a child puts into learning, the more likely he/she will do well on tests.
- Provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home.
- Make sure that your child is well rested on school days and especially the day of a test. Children who are tired are less able to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of a test.
- Give your child a well-rounded diet. A healthy body leads to a healthy, active mind.
- Provide books and magazines for your youngster to read at home. By reading new materials, a child will learn new words that might appear on a test.



# My Important Notes

My Important Notes





# References

- Education Development Center. Using Technology to Support Learning at Home. (2020, April 27). Retrieved September 02, 2020, from <https://www.edc.org/using-technology-support-learning-home>
- Hamilton, B. (2020, April 01). How to ensure your kids thrive in virtual learning: 5 tips from a psychologist. Retrieved September 02, 2020, from <https://www.news4jax.com/news/local/2020/04/01/how-to-ensure-your-kids-thrive-in-virtual-learning-5-tips-from-a-psychologist/>
- Intel Parents' Guide to Remote Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved September 3, 2020, from <https://www.intel.com/content/dam/www/public/us/en/documents/guides/parents-guide-to-remote-learning.pdf>
- Kemp, G., M.A., Smith, M., M.A., & Segel, J., P.h.D. (2019, June). Helping Children with Learning Disabilities [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/autism-learning-disabilities/helping-children-with-learning-disabilities.htm>
- Kosanovich, M., Lee, L. and Foorman, B. (2020). A Kindergarten Teacher's Guide to Supporting Family Involvement in Foundational Reading Skills (REL 2020-016). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>
- Morin, A., LCSW. (2020, February 10). How Much Should You Limit Kids' Screen Time and Electronics Use? [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellfamily.com/american-academy-pediatrics-screen-time-guidelines-1094883>
- Murray, S. (2020, February 5). 8 Easy Ideas to Add Math Into Your Daily Routine [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/8-easy-ideas-to-add-math-into-your-daily-routine>
- National Association for the Education of Young Children. Building Social and Emotional Skills at Home. (n.d.). Retrieved September 03, 2020, from <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/building-social-emotional-skills-at-home>
- Region 3 Comprehensive Center at ETS. Reopening Instructional Programs for Our Most Vulnerable Students: A Reopening Guidebook for the 2020-2021 School Year
- Regional Educational Laboratory Program. Teaching Math to Young Children for Families and Caregivers. (n.d.). Retrieved September 03, 2020, from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/central/resources/teachingearlymath/index.asp>
- U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Help Your Child Improve in Test-Taking. (April 1993). Retrieved September 03, 2020, from <https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/TestTaking/index.html>



**Virgin Islands Department of Education  
State Office of Curriculum and Instruction**

**St. Thomas**  
1834 Kongens Gade  
St. Thomas, VI 00802-6746  
Tel: 340-774-0100 \* Fax: 340-774-8168  
Website: [www.vide.vi](http://www.vide.vi)

**St. Croix**  
2133 Hospital Street  
St. Croix, VI 00820-4665  
Tel: 340-773-1095 \* Fax: 340-773-4476

