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March is Music in our Schools Month in the USVI. Here's What's Planned.

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Dionne Donadelle, center, along with students and music educators at Music In Our Schools Month Mini Concert Series "Cultural Day" on March 4 at Emancipation Garden on St. Thomas. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Virgin Islands Department of Education, Division of Music Education and Programs, has organized a series of public events through March 28 in recognition of the importance of music education during March's annual Music In Our Schools Month celebration, the department has announced.

To kick off the month-long activities, student musicians from schools in the St. Thomas-St. John District entertained the public at a special Mini Concert Series "Cultural Day" held in

Emancipation Garden on March 4. Next up is the Mini Concert Series “Choir Day” beginning at 12 p.m. on March 11 at Emancipation Garden. See full schedule [here](#).

According to Division Director Dionne Donadelle, the purpose of Music In Our Schools Month, which has been in existence for more than 30 years, is to “raise awareness of the importance of music education for all children—and to remind citizens that school is where all children should have access to music.”

In fact, Donadelle said music plays an important role in the academic and social development of young people.

“Statistics have proven that a child that has an opportunity to partake in the ARTS develops into a well-rounded, disciplined, creative and appreciative community-minded person,” she said.

“What’s important for the community to note is that music, or the arts, just doesn’t mean entertainment. We need to begin to appreciate the arts as an entity all its own. That provides a balance in a world that seems so heavily distorted on our morals, ethics and values. The ARTS offer students stability, and an opportunity to grow and develop through creativity and acceptance of others’ creations.”

While she encourages public attendance at all activities, Donadelle highlighted events of particular interest: the 2nd Annual Solo Classical and Jazz Competition held March 12 in the St. Thomas-St. John District, and March 16 and 18 in the St. Croix District. On March 17, St. Thomas residents can enjoy “Arts on the Dock” while St. Croix residents can enjoy “Arts at the Dorsch on March 19. Donadelle said both events will highlight “the arts as a whole, not just music.” Finally, Music is ME Day on March 25 will feature schools across the territory performing at different locations in the community for the full day.

Donadelle, a seasoned music educator herself, said it is important for the community to support students at the activities.

“Often times, we only take the opportunity to see our students perform for Christmas or spring concerts and/or during our local carnival and festival,” she began, adding, “but our students perform on a regular basis throughout the entire school year. Supporting our students at these events is a must. It shows that you value their time and effort at creating something that is uniquely their own.”

As a special tribute to V.I. History Month and Women’s History Month, which are both celebrated in March, each Monday during the month, Donadelle features a Virgin Islands woman that has influenced music in the territory in her “Music Mondays” series. Dr. Valrica Bryson, Department of Education director of Virgin Islands Cultural Education and longtime music educator, and Dr. Lois Hassell-Habtes, storyteller, musician and educator, are the first to be featured.

In addition to student musicians from V.I. public schools, events will feature choirs and musical ensembles from schools on the U. S. mainland.