

The Virgin Islands Consortium

BVI Students Encouraged To Eat Healthier

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TORTOLA -- Education officials here are ramping up efforts to get students to eat healthier foods. A team of persons from the Ministries of Education and Culture and Health and Social Development will be conducting baseline data collection in primary schools from today, September 14 as Government prepares to launch the Healthy Lifestyle School Intervention program.

The program seeks to improve the health and academic performance of students by improving the diet and physical activity patterns and will be launched in Grades 2 and 3 of the Territory's public schools in the first week in October.

Coordinator for Health Promotion Services and national focal point for Non-Communicable Diseases, Ivy George said in an effort to ensure the success of the program, a team consisting of physical education teachers, nurses and Public Health officers will go to 15 schools to collect data from some 700 students. Data that will be collected include weight, height, blood pressure, flexibility, endurance, strength, and body composition.

Additional information on knowledge, attitude and behavior as it pertains to physical activity and nutrition will also be captured.

George said the information collected will be used to evaluate the program, track the emerging trends and improve the effectiveness of the intervention to ensure sustainability.

She added, "The baseline data would also give us an opportunity to compare data from year to year to test the effectiveness of the program and determine areas for improvement".

This is a lifelong program, after five years we are hoping that the program will be refined and fully integrated within the entire school system."

The Healthy Lifestyle School Intervention program will be integrated within core subjects of math, science, language and physical education and will concentrate primarily on nutrition and physical activity. George encouraged teachers to own the material, be enthusiastic and present the information according to the outline.

Parents were also encouraged to learn more about the program and support the intervention by assisting their children with the five behavioral changes of eating breakfast daily, eating fruits and vegetables, reducing daily intake of fats, salts, sugary snacks and drinks and engaging in a variety of physical activities.