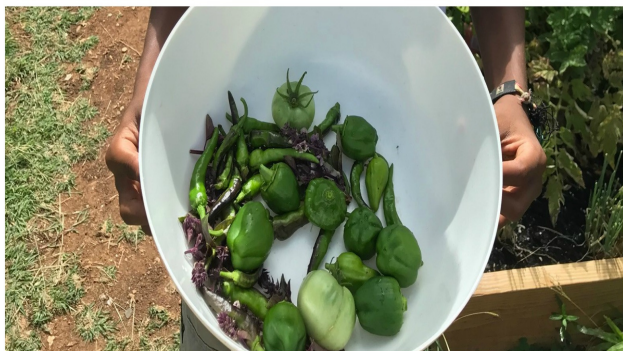


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Virgin Islands Conservation Society Launches Eco Schools In USVI

Education / **Published On September 28, 2018 10:49 AM /**

Staff **September 28, 2018**



The Virgin Islands Conservation Society announced on Thursday the launch the Eco School program in the USVI -- an education platform, award system and environmental management structure that promotes long-term, whole school (student, teachers, parents, community) action for sustainability and community reliance: economy, society and environment.

According to the release, sustainability is at the forefront of local, national, and global issues – with economic, social and environmental challenges facing ourselves, our children and future generations. VICS identified the need for the USVI schools, as there was not a recognized, integrated program connecting students with their immediate

environment in a way that empowered them or take action and experience the benefits. Some schools have elements of such a program, but do not have the overall structure and processes to ensure its holistic development and management.

Eco-Schools is the world's largest international environmental education program that engages Pre K-12 school students, faculty, administrators and community volunteers in a comprehensive, environment-based program to improve student environmental literacy and skills. In addition to direct environmental benefits, the program helps to dramatically improve student skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). It is also a proven framework for promoting youth leadership and community service.

Eco Schools offers hands-on learning opportunities and support inquiry-based education, critical thinking, use of technology and problem solving. The Eco-Schools model enhances the content and teaching methods while engaging the students in a positive transformation of their physical, social, and mental learning environments, while also providing financial savings and improved aesthetics to schools and school campuses.

VICS said it is collaborating with a U.S. national organization, National Wildlife Federation (NWF) <https://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA> ; and an international organization, Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) <http://www.ecoschools.global/> to introduce Eco-Schools, a globally established environmental educational program to the U.S.V.I.

Eco-Schools has 25 years of demonstrated success operating in over 67 countries engaging close to 19 million pupils world-wide.

An MOU has been established with NWF which will allow registered USVI schools to utilize all Eco Schools USA materials free of charge immediately. In conjunction, Eco Schools USVI will foster private/public partnerships to support local sustainable education initiatives and collaborate in developing locally relevant education materials.

"As of June 1st – 7 public schools and 1 private school have registered for the program and we anticipate that several more will sign up in the weeks to come." Said Valerie Peters, program director.

With support of the VICS staff, participating schools will follow a clearly laid out process and are evaluated after a period of participation, earning the Eco-School's Green Flag upon completion, according to the release. They tackle one "theme" at a time (i.e., energy, waste, food...) and progress from creating an action plan to incorporating it into their curriculum to involving their community.

By the end of the Spring 2019, many of the first registered Eco School should achieve the Bronze level in the program and be recognized/awarded accordingly. Ms. Tysha St. Jules - Claude O. Markoe School teacher has already been implementing the Eco School 7 step process with her school garden and was awarded the first Bronze level in the US Virgin Islands in recognition of her outstanding work in school yard habitat, according to the release.

Any students, teachers, parents, business, and community members wishing to get involved or find out more are invited to contact Valerie Peters at blueflagusvi@gmail.com

