



1. Overview of your organization's mission

Our mission is to serve! However, officially, our mission is:

Coral Reef Academy is a school where diversity is celebrated, community is valued, and students are thriving.

We believe that:

- Student learning is the utmost priority for the school.
- All students can learn.
- Students should have instructional materials that engage them in the learning process.
- Students learn in different ways and should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches to support their learning.
- Each student is valued as an individual with unique physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs.
- A student's self-esteem is enhanced by positive relationships and mutual respect between students and staff.
- Structure, predictability, and routine are vitally important to ensure student success and encourage independence

2. Demographics served and programs offered

Coral Reef Academy is a specialized K-12 educational institution serving students with Autism, ADHD, and other developmental disabilities. With campuses located on both St. Croix and St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, we are committed to providing a supportive, individualized, and inclusive learning environment. Our St. Thomas campus proudly opened in August 2024, expanding our reach and impact within the territory.

We offer two distinct academic and life-preparation tracks tailored to meet the diverse needs of our students:

➤ **Adaptive Daily Living & Workability Program**

This track is designed to foster greater independence by helping students master essential life skills. Areas of focus include:

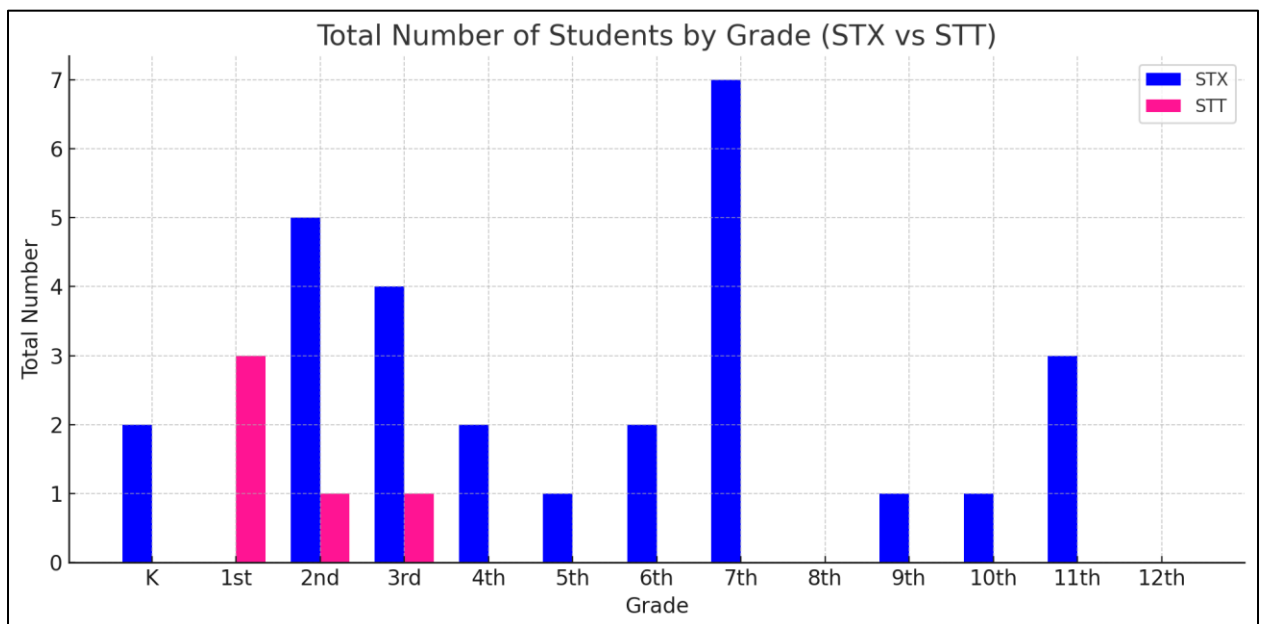
- Money and money management
- Time awareness and management
- Site word recognition and functional reading
- Personal and community safety
- Community engagement
- Career exploration and development

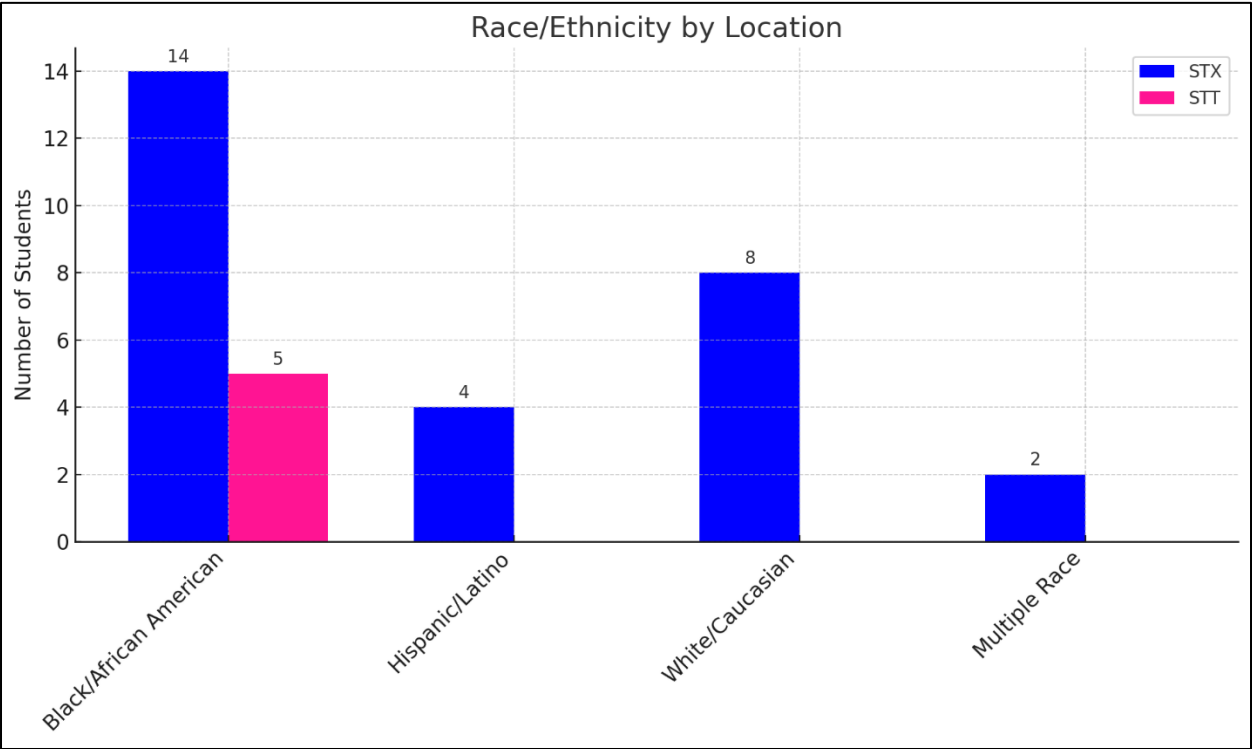
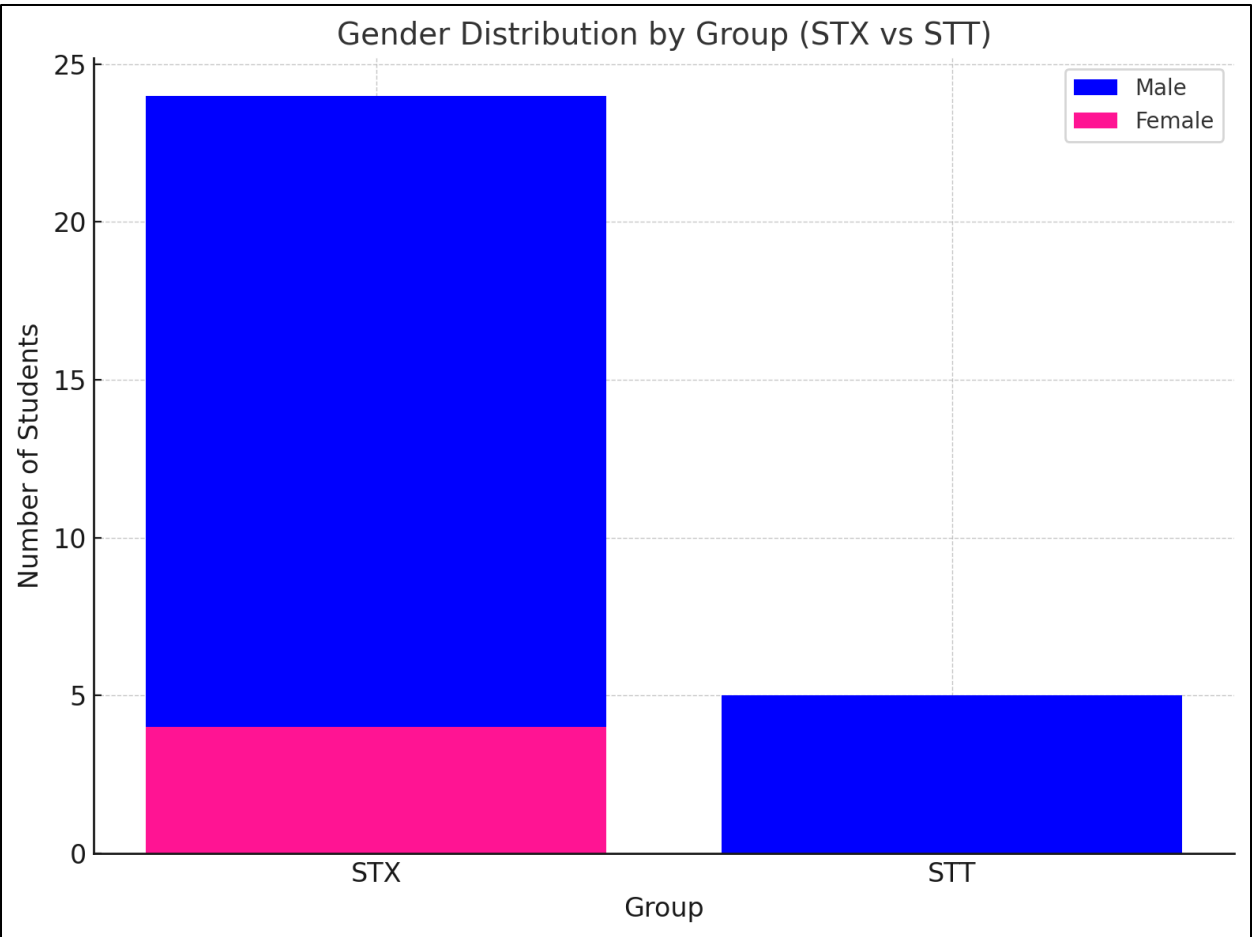
➤ **Post-Secondary Track**

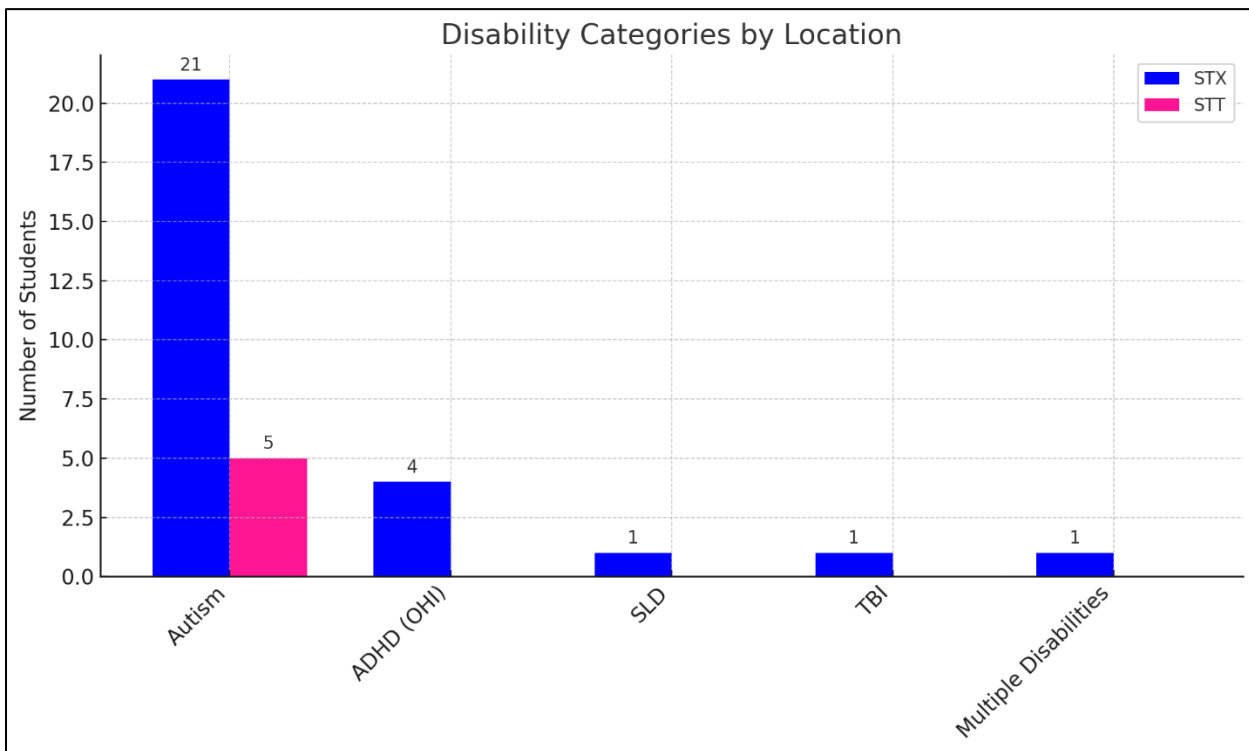
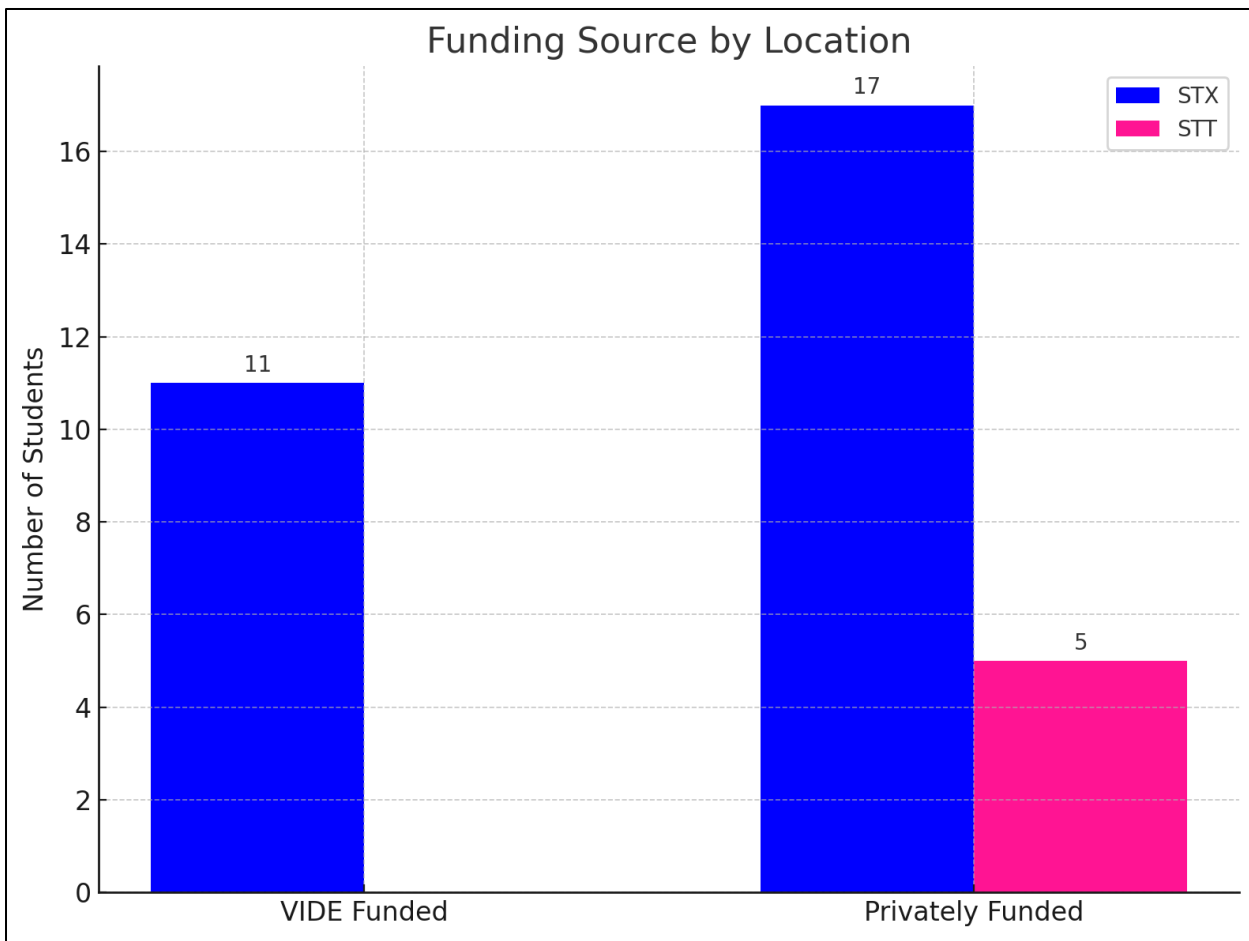
This program supports students who are approaching or at grade-level academically and preparing for life beyond high school. Students on this track are guided toward:

- College or university enrollment
- Degree programs or non-degree college experiences
- Continued academic achievement and independence

3. Data on the total population served, including a breakdown by type of disability.







	Financial Assistance for Privately Funded	Total Financial Aid Given
STX	64% of students receive	\$69,280
STT	60% of students receive	\$18,000

4. Trends and demographic changes in your program over recent years

Over the past two years, Coral Reef Academy has seen a notable increase in privately funded student enrollment, highlighting both a growing trust in our programs and a significant gap in available services for students with developmental disabilities within the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In August 2023, Coral Reef served 8 privately funded families. As of today, we serve 22 privately funded families across both our St. Croix and newly opened St. Thomas campuses. This growth does not reflect the 20+ families who completed the interview process but ultimately could not proceed due to the financial burden of tuition.

A particularly significant development is the enrollment trend within our new Project-Based Learning classroom: Of the 9 privately funded families enrolled in this program, 6 were previously homeschooling their children due to a lack of suitable educational options on-island. These families have expressed that Coral Reef Academy is the first viable solution they've found to meet their child's unique learning needs.

Through initial interviews and ongoing conversations, many families share stories of desperation and frustration with the limited support services available locally. Several have either relocated or seriously considered moving stateside in search of more comprehensive and specialized educational opportunities. This data reflects both the urgent demand for our services and the critical role Coral Reef Academy plays in filling a longstanding gap in the Virgin Islands' educational landscape.

5. Strategies that have proven effective in supporting student success within your programs

At Coral Reef Academy, we understand that meaningful learning begins with trust, safety, and connection. Our approach combines compassionate care with evidence-based educational strategies to meet the unique needs of each student. Below is an overview of the core philosophies and methods that guide our instruction:

Compassionate Care: We lead with love. Every student at Coral Reef is met daily with care, compassion, and respect. Many of our students have experienced trauma related to their disabilities, and we are deeply committed to trauma-informed care. Our educators understand that unless a student's basic needs—including the need for safety and emotional security—are met, true learning cannot take place.

We create a nurturing environment where students feel safe, understood, and supported, allowing them to learn and grow at their own pace.

TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children): Developed at the University of North Carolina, the TEACCH approach is central to our instruction. It aims to enhance the quality of life for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder through structured teaching.

Key components of TEACCH at Coral Reef include:

- Highly structured classrooms that reduce overstimulation
- Individualized schedules to promote routine and teach flexibility
- Visual supports to guide students through tasks and transitions
- Learning materials and physical spaces organized to minimize distractions
- Curriculum individualized to each student's interests and developmental level

This structure helps students become more independent, confident, and engaged in their learning.

ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis): Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is another core methodology used at Coral Reef to improve meaningful behaviors and promote learning. Our team uses:

- Observations, informal interviews, and data collection to identify skill gaps and behavioral challenges
 - Individualized goals focused on skill acquisition and behavior reduction
 - Proactive strategies to manage behaviors that interfere with learning
 - Teaching of replacement behaviors that are functional and socially appropriate
- ABA is woven into daily activities to support academic success and personal growth.

Project-Based Learning (PBL): In our Project-Based Learning classrooms, students explore real-world problems and work on extended, hands-on projects that foster deeper understanding and essential life skills.

Through PBL, students:

- Develop content knowledge in a meaningful context
- Build critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills
- Present their work to real audiences, building confidence and purpose
- Engage in learning that feels relevant, exciting, and student-driven

This approach cultivates independence, initiative, and a lifelong love for learning.

Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge.

(www.pblworks.org)

6. Existing collaboration with schools, government agencies, or other community partners that support students and their families.

Partnerships, Certifications, and Community Engagement

Coral Reef Academy is proud to play an active and collaborative role in the U.S. Virgin Islands, building strong relationships with public agencies, private organizations, and community partners to enhance the services available to students with developmental disabilities.

Collaboration with the Department of Education

- St. Croix: Since 2019, Coral Reef Academy has collaborated with the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDOE) to support students through a contractual agreement. Currently, we serve 11 DOE-referred students and are hopeful to expand that number to 12 students beginning August 2025.
- St. Thomas: We have initiated communication with the Special Education Department on St. Thomas. Due to recent leadership transitions, formal discussions are pending. Coral Reef Academy welcomes the opportunity to partner with VIDOE on St. Thomas to support students who may be struggling in traditional educational settings.

Licensing and Certification

- We proudly hold a Certificate of Operation from the Virgin Islands Department of Education for both our St. Croix and St. Thomas campuses.

- On St. Thomas, Coral Reef Academy is a licensed childcare facility, certified by the Department of Human Services.

Therapy Partnerships

To ensure comprehensive, wraparound care, Coral Reef Academy contracts with the following service providers on both campuses:

- Island Therapy Solutions
- JS Therapies

These partnerships allow us to offer critical therapies on-site, including:

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech-Language Therapy
- Physical Therapy

Educational Internships and Career Partnerships

Coral Reef Academy is dedicated to supporting future professionals and empowering youth through experiential learning:

- We provide internship opportunities to students from Good Hope Country Day School.
- We are preparing to begin a partnership with St. Croix Central High School's NAF Academy of Business, offering internships that provide hands-on experience in the field of education and behavioral health.

Community Engagement & Events

Coral Reef Academy takes pride in promoting awareness, inclusion, and celebration of neurodiversity in the Virgin Islands.

- Night to Shine (St. Croix)
In partnership with St. Croix Christian Church, Coral Reef supports this annual prom event created by the Tim Tebow Foundation, which honors individuals with disabilities in a joyful, inclusive celebration.
- Neurodiversity Day (St. Croix)
Each April, Coral Reef co-hosts this event which brings together community organizations, families, and businesses to celebrate our neurodiverse community. We proudly host a sensory-themed booth featuring interactive sensory tools and activities designed to engage individuals of all ages and abilities.

7. Policy recommendations or reforms to improve special education services in the territory

Across the nation, educational agencies are grappling with profound staffing shortages in critical roles—and the Virgin Islands are no exception. There is a growing need for certified special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialized service providers, including Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs), Occupational Therapists (OTs), Physical Therapists (PTs), and Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs). These professionals are not only key to providing individualized, high-quality education, but are also essential to ensuring compliance with federally mandated protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

At Coral Reef Academy (CRA), we are proud to stand alongside the broader educational community in the Virgin Islands in serving the needs of all students. Although we operate independently, we are deeply committed to the collective mission of providing equitable, accessible, and legally compliant educational services. We recognize that the responsibility to uphold IDEA and Section 504 requirements belongs to all of us who care for and support students with disabilities.

Like many communities, the Virgin Islands face real challenges in fully meeting the needs of students with disabilities, particularly when it comes to keeping up with the demands of federal compliance. Staffing shortages, particularly those tasked with implementing IDEA and Section 504, have made it difficult to complete annual and triennial Individualized Education Program (IEP) reviews on time and to consistently provide transportation services outlined in students' IEPs. Both of these areas are not just best practices—they are essential rights protected under IDEA, ensuring that every child receives the education and support they deserve.

When IEP reviews are delayed past their expiration dates, or when transportation services fall through, it impacts not only compliance but the trust families place in our schools. Students may miss out on vital support, and families are left navigating uncertainty. But these challenges are not insurmountable. With clear procedures, open communication, and strong collaboration between schools, service providers, and families, we can close these gaps and build a system that better serves every child.

By working together to strengthen timelines, clarify roles, and ensure that transportation and other critical services are consistently provided, we can

move closer to fulfilling the promises of IDEA and Section 504. Every step we take to improve compliance is also a step toward creating a more inclusive, responsive, and compassionate educational community.

The road ahead will require commitment and teamwork, but the goal is clear—and it is one well worth striving for: a school system where every student, regardless of ability, receives the support, respect, and opportunities they deserve. As a current contracted partner with VIDE, Coral Reef Academy would be honored to continue supporting in additional ways—whether by providing training, helping to create structured classroom models, partnering for external professional development opportunities, or expanding services to serve even more students across the territory. We are here as a committed partner, ready to walk this path forward together.

The Need for Specialized Training to Support Student Progress and Safety

In order to provide the highest quality educational experience for all students—particularly those with unique learning and behavioral needs—it is essential to invest in specialized, evidence-based training for educators and support staff. Specialized training not only equips staff with effective tools and strategies, but also ensures that students are supported in environments that are safe, compassionate, and structured for meaningful growth.

De-escalation training programs such as Safety Care and Pro-Act are critical for teaching staff how to safely and respectfully manage challenging behaviors. These programs emphasize prevention, early intervention, and the use of the least restrictive interventions necessary to maintain safety, protecting the dignity and rights of all students.

Training in compassionate care further strengthens the foundation of trust and respect between students and staff. Compassionate care practices emphasize empathy, understanding, and trauma-informed approaches, ensuring that all interactions are sensitive to each student's experiences and emotional needs.

Structured teaching methodologies like TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children) provide essential frameworks for creating predictable, supportive classroom environments. TEACCH strategies help students build independence, reduce anxiety, and foster engagement by using visual supports, organization, and clear expectations.

Finally, training in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a cornerstone of evidence-based practice in special education. ABA principles guide the development of

individualized supports that are data-driven, measurable, and focused on promoting positive behaviors and functional skills that enhance a student's ability to learn and thrive.

Each of these training areas—de-escalation, compassionate care, TEACCH, and ABA—are research-supported and integral to the progress and safety of our students. Investing in these professional development opportunities is a necessary step toward building school communities where every student can access education in a safe, supportive, and empowering environment.

Lastly, we want to strongly emphasize our commitment to continued growth as a school in order to better serve the needs of the population within the Virgin Islands. Achieving this vision will require significant investment—not only to expand, but also to sustain our current learning environment, instructional resources, allied health services, professional development, and our ability to recruit and retain high-quality educators.

8. Success stories or community impact resulting from advocacy the delivery of service

- [Coral Reef Academy video with testimonials](#)
- [Individual parent testimonial](#)