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## 173 Graduates of St. Croix Educational Complex Exemplify Excellence and Resilience

**Dubbed ‘E.L.I.T.E,’ the graduates impress with academic and extracurricular achievements, inspiring speeches, and a collective promise of future successes**

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All 173 seniors of the St. Croix Educational Complex High School met the requirements for graduation this year. At Tuesday’s graduation ceremony, the class of 2024 was dubbed “E.L.I.T.E” – an acronym that described them as empowered, lavish, invincible, tenacious, and extraordinary.

“Extraordinary. There is no better word to describe this class. You are a class that has broken records,” Education Commissioner Dionne Wells-Hendrington told the triumphant students. Other officials, including Governor Albert Bryan Jr., Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach, Senate

President Novelle E. Francis, and Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett were also present to celebrate the accomplishments of this extraordinary graduating class.

In his opening remarks, the school's principal Rodney Moorehead highlighted the school year's achievements, including several intramural sports trophies, the launching of the school's band program, the production of plays written and acted by students, and the reintroduction of the pre-cadet police program. The 10 seniors enrolled in the latter program have already applied to join the Virgin Islands Police Department, the audience learned.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. reflected on the pride he feels from celebrating the achievements of graduating students across the territory, a feeling which motivates him to attend graduation ceremonies even during times of crises. "Last week, I almost didn't make it to the Central graduation because I was distracted by how much effort it was taking to get the power back in St. John," Governor Bryan said. The governor said he ultimately decided to attend the graduation because the students make him "feel so good."

Class valedictorian Allarie Monsanto, gave audience members even more reasons to feel Complex pride when she shared the spotlight during her remarks to highlight the achievements of fellow classmates. "We have leaders like Malia Navarro who led the protests that sparked change in the environment of our school. We have athletes like Davina Browne who broke national records in Track and Field," Monsanto said about just two of the several students she brought attention to.

Meanwhile, salutatorian Alexia Sargeant gave her fellow classmates advice, weaving the class's E.L.I.T.E. acronym throughout her speech. "Lavish in the joy of every victory, no matter how small. Stand invincible in the face of adversity. Be tenacious in the pursuit of your dreams, and never forget how extraordinary we are," Sargeant exhorted the graduating class. Sargeant will continue her academic journey at the University of Connecticut where she will study physiology and neurobiology, while Monsanto will attend North Carolina A&T State University under a full ride Lewis and Elizabeth Dowdy scholarship where she will conduct chemical research.

After the students' addresses, the loud bass of Kanye West's song "Good Morning", blasted through the speakers as keynote speaker Tionee Scotland, a 2004 SCEC alumnus and the current Communications Director for Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, began her remarks. The verses of West's 2007 song served as a guiding message Scotland wanted to impart on the students. "Remember, morning always comes. So no matter the mistakes you made the day before, you have an opportunity to shake off all negative vibes and greet every new season, like this one, with a big, beautiful, determined elite 'good morning.'"

As Scotland set the stage with her own anthem, she asked the students, who were at "one of the biggest transitions of [their] lives," what theirs would be—"That's my challenge for you today. What song will your life sing?"