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Ricardo Richards Elementary Named National Model School, to Present at 2025 Conference in Washington, D.C.

Ricardo Richards Elementary School will present at the 2025 Model Schools Conference in Washington, D.C., after earning national recognition for its data-driven approach, instructional innovation, and commitment to closing achievement gaps.

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The Ricardo Richards Elementary School on St. Croix.

Ricardo Richards Elementary School has earned national recognition as a Model School by the Center for Model Schools and will be honored at the 2025 Model Schools Conference, scheduled for June 22–25 in Washington, D.C.

The distinction, awarded to schools leading innovative change and significantly improving student achievement, places Ricardo Richards Elementary among a select group of high-performing institutions across the country. The St. Croix-based school was recognized for its commitment to transformative instruction, collaboration, and data-informed decision-making that has resulted in measurable gains in student performance and equity.

“We are honored to be recognized as a Model School at MSC 2025. This opportunity reflects the heart of our work turning challenges into blueprints for student success and school-wide impact,” said Principal Natasha O’Halloran-Smith.

As part of the national event, Ricardo Richards Elementary will present a session titled "Building a Blueprint for Success: Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap." The presentation will share practical strategies and action steps that the school has implemented to elevate achievement and narrow disparities among student populations. More than 5,000 educators and school leaders from across the country are expected to attend the conference.

The Model Schools Conference is widely regarded as one of the premier gatherings of educators focused on school improvement and future-ready learning environments. Hosted annually by the Center for Model Schools, the conference provides a platform for showcasing breakthrough practices that drive student growth and school transformation.

Commissioner of Education Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D., applauded the school’s achievement. “Ricardo Richards Elementary is a shining example of what is possible when visionary leadership, passionate educators, and a supportive school community come together to make a difference. This national spotlight is well-deserved, and we are proud to see them represent the Virgin Islands on such a transformative stage,” she said.

The V.I. Department of Education said the selection reflects not only the work happening within the school’s walls but also the broader potential for educational excellence in the territory.