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UVI Brings Mangrove Science to St. Croix Classrooms Through New Educator Workshop

UVI and GRROE USVI hosted their first Mangroves in the Classroom educator workshop on St. Croix, bringing together 22 participants to explore place-based environmental education, hands-on science, and plans to launch the program in Spring 2026.

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Myrna G. Cabe of Claude O. Markoe School contributes to the discussion on classroom adaptation and student engagement during the MIC Educator Workshop on St. Croix.
By. KRISTIN GRIMES

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The University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), in partnership with the GRROE USVI Mangroves team, hosted its first Mangroves in the Classroom (MIC) Educator Workshop on July 28 at the Albert A. Sheen Campus Great Hall. The full-day event marked a significant step toward bringing place-based environmental science education to St. Croix's schools.

Originally developed on St. Thomas in 2022, the MIC program engages students in mangrove ecology, restoration, and conservation through classroom lessons, hands-on experiments, field experiences, and storytelling. The July 28 workshop introduced educators to the program's interactive, science-based curriculum, with a specific focus on adapting its lessons for middle school students and the St. Croix community. Implementation on St. Croix is expected to begin in Spring 2026.

Funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Roots to Reefs Project, the U.S. National Science Foundation's Strong Coasts initiative, and the Schmidt Ocean Coalition, the workshop brought together 22 educators, environmental professionals, and community stakeholders from across the Virgin Islands.

Over the course of the day, participants took part in curriculum walkthroughs, educator panel discussions, and breakout groups focused on tailoring the MIC program for younger learners. Special attention was given to strategies that incorporate visual tools, sensory engagement, and creative storytelling—all while ensuring lessons reflect St. Croix's cultural and ecological landscape.

Participants also discussed the importance of field-based learning and community integration. "I would love to take my students to see the mangrove restoration projects on St. Thomas," said Risa Gordon, a science teacher at St. Croix Educational Complex High School. "Seeing that kind of work in action makes the science real."

Educators emphasized that the MIC program could be transformative in both content and impact. "The MIC workshop was another significant learning opportunity for me, seeing the brighter side of how the entire U.S. Virgin Islands, families, and students, benefit from the presence of mangroves in our coastal communities," said Myrna Cabe of Claude O. Markoe Elementary School. "The integration of the MIC program in schools would enhance students' motivation to learn and take part in various hands-on learning experiences, do experiments, participate in field trips, and explore the real world—making them resilient, life-long learners."

Dr. Kristin Wilson Grimes, research associate professor at UVI and lead for both the GRROE USVI Mangroves and MIC programs, praised the enthusiasm of the St. Croix educators. "We are thrilled to see how energized St. Croix educators are to bring mangrove science to their students," she said. "MIC thrives because of the creativity and dedication of our teachers."

The workshop emphasized a commitment to local knowledge and sustainable education practices that equip students to better understand and protect their island environment.

For more information about the Mangroves in the Classroom program or to receive updates, contact Dr. Kristin Wilson Grimes at kristin.wilson@uvi.edu.