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Five Educators Named 2025–26 St. Croix District Teacher of the Year Candidates

The Department of Education has announced five St. Croix educators as candidates for the 2025–26 Teacher of the Year, recognizing their leadership, instructional excellence, and commitment to student achievement ahead of this year's district ceremony.

Education / **Published On December 11, 2025 12:00 PM /**

Staff Consortium **December 11, 2025**

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From left to right, VIDE educators Adreian Sato, Joanie Phillip, Jennifer Novero, Ronda Campbell, Jason Arcilla. By. VIDE.

The V.I. Department of Education has named five educators as candidates for the 2025–2026 St. Croix District Teacher of the Year, highlighting their leadership, instructional excellence, and dedication to the students they serve. The announcement marks the beginning of this year's

selection process, which will culminate in the district's annual recognition ceremony later in the school year.

VIDE Commissioner Dionne Wells-Hedrington praised the honorees, noting their significant contributions to classrooms and the broader school community. "Each of these educators represents the best of our public education system. Their passion, innovation, and dedication uplift our schools, empower our students, and strengthen our community," she said.

This year's candidates reflect a wide range of expertise, from special education to STEM, literacy, technical education, and advanced mathematics. Their combined years of service and commitment to student achievement underscore VIDE's ongoing efforts to highlight educators who push academic excellence forward.

At St. Croix Central High School, Adreian Sato serves as the Department Chairperson for Special Education and a 9th Grade Resource Teacher. With 11 years in the classroom, he works closely with teachers, families, and administrators to support compliance and student growth. His approach ensures that learners receive individualized support, reinforcing his reputation as a collaborative leader dedicated to academic success.

Pearl B. Larsen PreK-8 School's candidate, Jayson Arcilla, brings a decade of experience teaching 8th grade Science and Social Studies. In addition to classroom instruction, he has coached the school's Science Bowl and Junior Solar Sprint teams, encouraging students to explore STEM education. His inquiry-based, hands-on teaching style continues to foster curiosity and critical thinking.

At Ricardo Richards Elementary School, 6th Grade English Language Arts teacher Joanie Phillip is recognized for her advocacy and service. Beginning her teaching career in 2008, she has become a respected voice for students and colleagues. She also serves as a union representative for the American Federation of Teachers Local 1826 and teaches in the St. Croix Adult Education Program, helping adult learners meet their academic goals. Her dedication to literacy and empowerment extends across generations.

Representing the St. Croix Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC), Business teacher Ronda Campbell has served with the VIDE since 1997. A key figure in developing CTEC's School-to-Work Program, she has helped secure internship opportunities with local businesses, expanding pathways that connect students to the workforce. Her leadership continues to strengthen the link between classroom instruction and real-world career preparation.

At St. Croix Educational Complex High School, International Cultural Exchange teacher Jennifer Novero-Gantan works with 11th grade Trigonometry and AP Calculus students. She collaborates closely with the Mathematics Department to build a comprehensive, data-driven instructional cycle focused on assessment and continuous improvement. Her work ensures rigorous, student-centered math instruction that prepares learners for college-level studies and STEM careers.

VIDE officials said the district celebrates each candidate for their exceptional service and their impact on St. Croix's students. One of the five educators will ultimately be selected as the 2025–2026 St. Croix District Teacher of the Year and honored later this school year.