

The Virgin Islands Consortium

At Claude O. Markoe Elementary, An Attempt To Groom Leaders Early

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ST. CROIX – Claude O. Markoe Elementary School held its inaugural Student Leadership Elections in the school's library where sixth grader Diana Macedon and fifth grader Rory Ramsdell were elected president and vice president, respectively, according a press release issued on Monday by the Virgin Islands Department of Education.

The girls were two of seven students vying for the elected offices. Many of the students' campaign speeches centered on enhancing school clubs, expanding field trip options and beautifying the school grounds. Ballots were cast following the speeches, according to the release.



Diana Macedon gives her campaign speech

at Student Leadership Elections at Claude O. Markoe Elementary on May 5.

The event, which took place on May 5, was the brainchild of technology integration teacher Janice Simon and was held to introduce students in 3rd through 6th grades to leadership—something typically introduced at the junior high and high school levels, Simon explained.

A host of guest speakers attended the two-hour gathering, including former Senator Usie Richards, who gave a presentation on what it takes to be a good leader, and Toast Master and local radio personality Abdul Ali, who spoke to students about team leading and standard setting.

Faith George, St. Croix District acting deputy superintendent, said she was pleased to see the first student leadership election at Claude O. Markoe successfully executed. She explained that she was involved in the program's implementation at the Fredriksted school during the 2013-14 school year when she served as assistant principal.

"We wanted to be able to demonstrate leadership styles in our students, let them be empowered and give them an opportunity to have a say in the decision-making process here at Claude O. Markoe School," George said at the event. "I'm so happy that we've had the opportunity for the students to go through the electoral process."

George's sentiments.



Rory Ramsdell gives her campaign speech at

Student Leadership Elections at Claude O. Markoe Elementary on May 5.

"I'm really happy today that the students got an opportunity to really understand what leadership is all about," she said. "It is something that begins today, but goes through their entire lives."

While students who are often encouraged to participate in leadership organizations are those who fare well academically, Claude O. Markoe is taking a different approach with its 30-member student leadership team.

“This process is an opportunity for students who are academically inclined to continue to shine, as well as those who may not be as academically inclined, but they have strengths in other areas, to show that they can be a part of this leadership team and be able to move the school forward,” George said.

Simon agreed.

“Usually, a leadership group focuses only on students who are on the Honor Roll,” she said. “But I find that we give those students who are in the average or lower end no reason to do well. This gives us a great opportunity to reach students who may be struggling academically or otherwise.”

Claude O. Markoe’s student leaders serve as peer tutors, volunteer in community activities, assist teachers with classroom tasks, help monitor peers under the direction of an adult and more.

“Students themselves ask about elected offices. It is a good thing because our goal is to shape them and mold them, so they can be able to see that they are true leaders, and they can make a difference and know that their voices count,” Simon concluded.

Candidates for the offices of president and vice president included: Ali Al-Jaloudi - President Jantje Green - President Diana Macedon - President Rory Ramsdell - VP Amarjahan DeCambra - VP Krishna Ramkissoo - VP Alliston Walwyn – VP

Feature Image: (L to R): Student Leadership Team President Diana Macedon and Vice President Rory Ramsdell

Image Credit: The Virgin Islands Department of Education