

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Roles Swap At Complex As Administration Become Students And Students Administration

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ST. CROIX -- They locked him out of the main gate. He was late, not properly dressed and did not carry an ID. But after some debate and clarification, the student, seemingly in his late 50s, was allowed to enter the Educational Complex and ordered to immediately report to the main office.

Elsewhere on the campus, teenage monitors tried to keep disorderly students, all in their late 20s and beyond, in check. And the principal, no more than 17 years old, patrolled the grounds making sure her institution was operating smoothly.

If something seems off-kilter with that picture, that's because there was -- albeit by design.

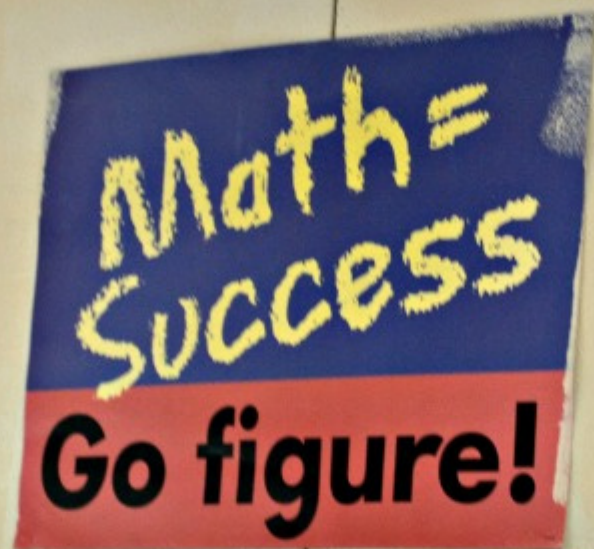
All this week, the Virgin Islands Department of Education has been participating in [American Education Week](#), which ends today and has seen participation from many local schools, whose faculty and staff, along with students, put on multiple events to mark the occasion. On Thursday, the Educational Complex held what it called Educator for the Day, where students took on the roles of the school's administration and, conversely, administration acted like students.

The coordination of the activity was organized to every last detail, too, with teachers and other administrators actually dressing the role that they played. Some passed as students effortlessly. Others, though, not so much.

"At first, I thought it would have been easy, but it's turning out to be real hard, man," said Taliyaa Soto, 16, who was acting as a monitor for the day. "Now I know how the monitors feel when we don't listen to them, and how they become frustrated because of it." Ms. Soto, an 11th grader who said she wanted to join the military upon graduation, said her advice to students is to listen to monitors when they speak.

And Hilrianna Chooran, who acted as principal on Thursday, said the experience was great, with her most challenging task being clearing the hall during periods.

"Taking orders from a person your same age is a little difficult, but it ends up happening and we got through with it," Ms. Choosan, a 12th grader looking to study marine biology at the University of the Virgin Islands' St. Thomas campus, said. She was also tasked with giving announcements, checking on classes and making sure that school operations were proceeding normally.





















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2. Be Honest	13. Be Considerate	25. Work Hard
3. Be Sincere	14. Be Assertive	26. Stay Focused
4. Be Respectful	15. Be Creative	27. Take Initiative
5. Be Responsible	16. Be Diligent	28. Ask Questions
6. Be Confident	17. Be Obedient	29. Get Organized
7. Be Thankful	18. Be Zealous	30. Love
8. Be Optimistic	19. Have Empathy	31. Smile
9. Be Compassionate	20. Have Patience	32. Persevere
10. Be Ambitious	21. Have Integrity	
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As for the overall experience, Ms. Choosan said she believes it gave students "the chance to experience how a teacher feels, being in front of a class, or having to deal with disruption or people who are being difficult -- it gives the students a chance to know how it feels having to be in that position."

Ms. Choosan, who said she has always respected her leaders, made known that the experience will only work to strengthen her attitude towards the school's administration.

"Being who I am, I've never disrespected authority," she revealed. "I've always had full respect and have always followed the rules. So for me, I look at it as no different because I already knew it was a hard job. Being in the shoes and having to take action, it's a little harder."

Meanwhile, outstanding members of the community were invited to speak to students about the importance of education and how to succeed in the workforce. They included Genevieve Whitaker, deputy supervisor of the Virgin Islands Election System, St. Croix Foundation's Diana James, and Adlah Donastorg, former senator and two-time

gubernatorial candidate, among other first-rate residents.

"I encouraged the students to be driven by their passion," Ms. Whitaker, who graduated from Complex in 2000, said. "I encourage them to be deliberate in goal-setting -- what you want to be and what path you're going to take to get there."

Ms. James, who recently returned from a conference in San Francisco, California, where she learned about the skill sets that businesses all around the country will demand from future employees, said she spoke to the students about the importance of those abilities and the significant impact they will have on the schools and students who adopt them.

And Mr. Donastorg, a former senator-turned-entrepreneur, spoke to the students about money management, "because I believe that is the most valuable tool that they can have."

Mr. Donastorg said he used professional athletes and recording artists that lacked money management skills and ultimately lost their fortunes, as examples of the repercussions of bad financial planning.

"I think that the Virgin Islands should now start evolving, where we actually empower our young people and teach them the basic principles of money management, from their personal lives to their professional lives," he said.