

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Ricardo Richards Elementary Rolls Out Initiative To Encourage Good Behavior

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ST. CROIX -- Students and staff at Ricardo Richards Elementary School (RRES) vibrantly rolled out their School Year 2016-17 Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiative to improve students' overall behavior on the campus and on school buses.

Activities at an opening ceremony on October 31 included a recital of the school's pledge, a discussion on the school's beautification project, and cultural performances by students. The school's Strawberry mascot also came out to encourage good behavior.

Students later rotated by class to eight significant areas of the campus where they received graphic instructions on the expected behaviors. School staff were appropriately stationed at the office, library, hallway, cafeteria, playground, restroom, classroom and the bus station to coach students on the required behaviors.

Speaking at 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Jenelle Hendricks' classroom, Principal Wendy Gonzales referred to Ricardo Richards School students as strawberries. "They are four qualities that make for a great strawberry," she began. "We do not have any strawberries in here that are rotten. We do not have any that are malnourished. They are all nurtured and stimulated, which come primarily from their teacher."

Following the Ricardo Richard Elementary School acronym, RRES, Principal Gonzales added that students are great because they are **Responsible, Respectful, Enthusiastic** and **Scholarly**.

In her PBIS classroom presentation, Hendricks instilled in students the following:

- To be *responsible* you are expected to be ready to work, keep your hands and feet to yourselves and stay on the task.
- To be *respectful* you must listen and follow directions, take care of all property and use appropriate voice levels.
- To be *enthusiastic* you are expected to raise your hands and wait your turn.
- To be *scholarly* you must complete assignments on time, do your best, read and follow directions carefully and check your work.

"Teachers are constantly coming up with exciting ways to engage our students so we really don't have rules (at school). Students know that there is a certain level of expectation because our standards are very high." Principal Gonzales said. "Students know their purpose, no rules just expectations."

Dr. Sandra Covington-Smith, the Virgin Islands Department of Education PBIS national consultant, said that all schools on St. Croix, including the Alternative Education Program received training in the PBIS format. Covington-Smith, also the expert PBIS coordinator across the country and in some countries in Europe, said that learning institutions from Head Start to universities are involved in the behavioral training.

Kathleen Merchant, the Data Manager for the Virgin Islands Office of Special Education serves as the local PBIS coordinator and liaison for Implementation for the Student Centered Solutions (SCS) Group.

*Feature Image: From left to right: Kg teacher Denise Vanterpool, SOSE Data Manager Kathleen Merchant, VIDE PBIS Coordinator Sandra Covington Smith and Assistant Principal Juliette Heddad-Miller flank Ricardo Richards School's Strawberry mascot along with Kindergarten students after a PBIS rollout program on Monday, October 31. (Credit: Department of Education)*