

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Kerra Samuel And Shernore Prince Named 2018-19 District Teacher Of The Year

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The Virgin Islands Department of Education in a release issued Saturday recognized Kerra Samuel, above left, the intermediate computer lab teacher at Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School on St. Croix, and Shernore Prince, above right, a sixth grade math, science and health teacher at Joseph Sibilly Elementary School on St. Thomas, as the 2018-2019 St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John District Teachers of the Year, respectively.

Samuel and Prince will serve as public education ambassadors in their respective districts through October 2019, D.O.E. said.

“Ms. Samuel’s dedication to students was apparent from her detailed answers in the application packet to her innovative strategies in teaching her students about cyber safety and online etiquette, despite not having devices for students to use,” St. Croix District Superintendent Colleen Williams said. “Ms. Samuel demonstrated resiliency and determination in educating our students with the tools available.”

St. Thomas-St. John District Superintendent Dionne Wells-Hedrington said of Prince, “Ms. Prince is an exceptional teacher that understands the importance of providing her students with a learning experience that is personalized to meet their individual needs.”

The annual District Teacher of the Year selection process involves each school submitting, for consideration, the names of their School Teacher of the Year along with an extensive application packet that includes a detailed questionnaire. An independent selection committee/panel of judges reviews the applications, narrowing them to a group of finalists. Classroom observations of the finalists are conducted and the Teacher of the Year is ultimately selected. Applicants in the St. Thomas-St. John District also undergo a one-on-one interview and video evaluation.

Samuel, who has been teaching for nearly two decades, describes how she engages students in the learning process.

“I have learned that in order to capture students’ attention, students need to learn about the world they live in,” she said. “Many times, we don’t have the means necessary to take students on a field trip to recap or expand on lessons taught in the classroom. Technology being at the forefront of my teaching, I take my students on virtual tours of what we are learning.”

Samuel highlighted a classroom activity that involved students reading an article about a famed painter in Savannah, Ga.

“Many of them had no idea where that place was,” she said. “Hence, we went online to visit Savannah. We used YouTube and other sites to visit the place, look at key features of the city and look at the many paintings done by the famous artist.”

Using the word TEACHER as an acronym, Samuel says, “time, education, attitude, change, heart, eagerness, and being remembered” comprise an effective teacher.

Prince, who began teaching in 2012, offered her take on the profession, calling it a “gift.”

“To be a teacher takes more than a brilliant mind; it takes more than that person who’s conducted years of research and studies,” she said. “To be a teacher takes a well-rounded person with knowledge, confidence, life experiences, one that has a willingness to adopt and implement changes in the classroom to meet current educational trends and mandates, and most importantly, a heart big enough to give love to every child they encounter.”

Prince went on to say that in order to “be an outstanding teacher, you must be willing to sacrifice your own time to help a child...and be able to view situations from a child’s vantage point, while utilizing the knowledge you have gained throughout life experiences and book knowledge to...truly understand a child’s needs and attempt to...find solutions as a parent would.”

Finalists for the 2018-2019 District Teacher of the Year in the St. Croix District include Mary McIntosh, Special Education teacher at Eulalie Rivera Elementary School; Tryphean Cornett, Language Arts teacher at St. Croix Adult Education Program, and Marcel Lindsey, Science teacher at the Youth Rehabilitation Center. Finalists in the St. Thomas-St. John District include Ceciley Robinson, Charlotte Amalie High School and Althea Alabanzas, Lockhart Elementary School.

Following an independent application and selection process, Samuel or Prince will be named the Territory's 2019 State Teacher of the Year and will represent the Virgin Islands' public education system on the national level.

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