

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## USVI STEMPREP Students Register Top Performance In Philadelphia

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For seven weeks last summer, five USVI trainees had the opportunity to conduct research with scientist and doctors at some of Philadelphia's most prestigious universities, according to a recently issued release.

The STEMPREP Project, which was sponsored by the Distance Learning Center, prepares high achieving underrepresented minority students for careers in medicine and biomedicine. The program begins in 7th grade and continues to invite trainees back through high school and college. Senai Assefa, Brent Biscoe, Brandon Hodge, Bryah Martin, and Jebron Perkins were recruited from St. Croix and St. Thomas schools, and are now high school juniors, the release said.

Setting up experiments, collecting data, and monitoring results are some of the tasks students performed as part of the STEMPREP Project.

The trainees used the skills learned in the previous years to conduct cutting edge research during summer 2018. Senai Assefa now lives in Minnesota and attends the St. Paul Academy. He conducted his research on the effect of alcohol on the liver and its regenerative process at Thomas Jefferson University. Brent Biscoe left St. Thomas after Hurricane Maria to attend Trinity College Boarding School in Ontario, Canada. His research was conducted at Thomas Jefferson University. He experimented with intervertebral disc in mice to understand degenerative bone disease. Brandon Hodge also left St. Croix after Hurricane Irma and attends the University High School in Orlando, Florida. His research examined the effect certain cancer drugs had on Myeloma cancer cells at the University of Pennsylvania. Bryah Martin of All Saints School spent her summer examining cells undergoing mechanotransduction at University of Pennsylvania. Jebron Perkins also relocated from the St Croix Educational Complex to Eastview High School in Texas. His research studied the effect of NSAIDs on teeth at Thomas Jefferson University. These trainees participated in groundbreaking research that may lead to medical advancement in the future.

The STEMPREP Project's deadline for the Summer 2019 is January 31, 2019. Seventh and 8th graders who love science, possess an A average and are interested in careers in science are eligible.

Applications can be found [here](#). Applicants must submit last three years of report cards, letter(s) of recommendation from middle school STEM teachers, register and take SSAT national exam (fee waivers can be obtained for the SSAT national exam.)