

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Young Men At Lockart Elementary Learn Coding

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ST. THOMAS -- Young men in grades 4 – 6 gathered at the Lockhart Elementary School on Saturday for a mentally stimulating coding workshop hosted by STEAM Education Director Shamika Williams-Henley, a part of her “Gentlemen of eSTEAM” initiative, the Department of Education has announced.

According to the release, the two-hour workshop, facilitated in partnership with the jeniusLogic Foundation, introduced students to the logic-based analysis required for writing and debugging codes using the coding language Swift. According to jeniusLogic Foundation Program Director Joshua Mitchell, the local non-profit teaches young Virgin Islanders entrepreneurial skills and how to build mobile apps using the Swift codes.

Students were introduced to functions which they used to solve various puzzles within the Swift Playgrounds app, D.O.E. said. Swift Playgrounds is an iPad-based coding application that teaches students coding concepts and allows them to write and test their code in real-time as they solve puzzles designed to reinforce the coding concepts. The puzzles then grew in complexity from challenge to challenge. During the session, students would break the silence with a thrilling “I got it!” or “Yes!” in response to solving their puzzles and advancing to the next level.

Mr. Mitchell, who also runs a software development company, jeniusLogic, LLC, emphasized the importance of students identifying their passions and how they can pursue careers that align with those passions. He also shared resources where students could continue their learning and development.

“The technology industry is rapidly evolving with enormous opportunities for our young people. It is crucial for our youth to understand that they are not merely passive consumers in the technology, but they are innovators, creators, and problem-solvers as well,” Mr. Mitchell explained.

Senator Oakland Benta dropped in to check out the workshop and worked excitedly alongside the students as they practiced the coding concepts on Swift Playgrounds.

“The world is truly yours. If you take what you learned today and you continue to develop, there is nothing that will be able to stop you. I want to thank the parents for being so committed to these students and their development in these fields because their development is essential to our future,” Mr. Benta said.

D.O.E. said the Gentlemen of eSTEAM workshop series was established to help young men develop confidence as well as the competencies needed to excel in the STEAM fields.

The Division of STEAM Education is actively recruiting interested persons to join the eSTEAM initiative. Interested participants should contact Director Williams-Henley at Shamika.williams@vide.vi or St. Croix District Technology Coordinator Dr. Everett Ryan at everett.ryan@vide.vi. STEAM-related jobs and careers are forecasted to grow and emerge exponentially over several decades. The overarching vision, therefore, is to nurture young minds within the Virgin Islands, both among females and males, to possess the requisite knowledge and skills to become leaders and creators of the burgeoning information age.