

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Lt. Gov. Roach, An Author, Leads Way During 11th Annual Governor's Summer Reading Challenge Kickoff In STT-STJ District

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ST. THOMAS -- The Department of Education in partnership with the Offices of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, launched the 11th Annual Governor's Summer Reading Challenge in the St. Thomas-St. John District on June 19 at Yvonne Milliner-Bowsky Elementary School, D.O.E. said in a release. The fun-filled activity brought together three of the six 2019 Reading Challenge authors, including Lt. Governor Tregenza Roach, in an effort to motivate students in grades K-6 to read five or more books during the summer months.

Moderated by Cynthia Graham, Department of Education public relations director, the launch event featured motivational messages from guest speakers, book highlights from 2019 Reading Challenge authors, and opportunities for students to interact with their peers and guest speakers.

The event's main speaker, Mr. Roach, opened his remarks by explaining the important role the illustrator plays in a book. He said the illustrator tells a book's story through pictures, something that is especially important for young readers.

The lieutenant governor, who is a first-time Reading Challenge author, also pointed out that in his book, *The Lesson Box*, he was keen to showcase the beauty of the Caribbean with its unique trees, fruits, sights and sounds. He encouraged students to become familiar with the many wonders of the tropical environment in which they live.

Mr. Roach's inspirational message to students concluded with him encouraging them to picture themselves one day becoming an author or an illustrator, according to D.O.E.

First-time Reading Challenge author, Wendy-Ann Diaz, who authored *Claude's Journey*, a historic comic book that revisits the Danish West Indies' slavery past through the eyes of a contemporary high school student, reminded students of the importance of education and knowing their history.

"You have been given a gift and you must use it wisely," Diaz said of the benefits of education.

Liza Margolis, also a first-time Reading Challenge author, said her book, *Jacob and Jet*, was based on the real-life adventures of her son, Jacob and his dog, Jet. She wowed students by showing them an actual photo of Jet on her mobile phone.

Dr. Symra Dee Brown, deputy superintendent in the St. Thomas-St. John District, challenged students to make a "pinky promise" by locking fingers with another student and declaring they would read more books than the other during the summer months. The auditorium erupted with excitement as the students promised to outdo each other in reading this summer.

Students in grades K-6 at public and private schools across the Territory receive a packet of at least two books, courtesy of the Office of the Governor and the Department of Education, to help get them started in the annual challenge. For additional reading material, students are encouraged to visit their local public libraries or to download e-books.

According to D.O.E, in the Virgin Islands, students receive books written and illustrated by Virgin Islanders or other Caribbean authors and illustrators. The Governor's Summer Reading Challenge is a national initiative.

The 11th Annual Governor's Summer Reading Challenge runs June 3 to September 20, 2019.