

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Eulalie Rivera ESL Teacher Named 'September Featured Educator' For Exceptional Work With English Language Learners

Education / **Published On September 13, 2019 10:24 AM /**

Staff **September 13, 2019**



ST. CROIX -- Eulalie R. Rivera K-8 School English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher Marie Hannemann has been selected as the WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) Featured Educator for September 2019, the Dept. of Education has announced.

WIDA's Featured Educator is a monthly interview with an educator to learn how he or she is making a difference for English learners. In her interview, Hennemann said her passion for educating English learners stems from her own early childhood experiences, D.O.E.

said.

“When I was a kindergarten student, I only spoke Spanish,” she said. “I was placed in a mainstream classroom without any support or resources. For this reason, I do understand and empathize with students who struggle academically due to the lack of effective language-learning opportunities and programs. At this tender age, I came to the realization that helping children learn was my calling in life. I have known since the first grade that I wanted to become an elementary school teacher.”

Hannemann, who has been teaching for 28 years—10 as an ESL teacher—said her approach to teaching English learners is to first build their self-esteem. On St. Croix, English learners historically come from Spanish, French Creole, Tagalog, Arabic and Serbian backgrounds, the department said.

“I constantly remind my students that nobody’s perfect...and I urge them to be unafraid of making mistakes while learning English,” she said. “I believe in creating an atmosphere of respect and rapport where English learners are like family members.”

Hannemann said techniques and strategies that have proven effective for English learners in her classroom include pre-teaching vocabulary, using visual aids, activating prior knowledge, and modeling. Of activating prior knowledge, she said, “English learners need to be able to visualize and connect to what they already know in order to comprehend new concepts and ideas. The idea is to build on my students’ own experiences so that content learning can become more accessible.”

Zulma Torres, ESL teacher at St. Croix Central High School, was the first USVI educator named as the WIDA Featured Educator in September 2017.