

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Governor's Summer Reading Challenge Initiative in Full Gear, Will Last Through Sept. 3

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr speaks to students at the kick-off rally for the 2019 Governor's Summer Reading Challenge at the Arthur A. Richards K-8 School on St. Croix. By. THE V.I. DEPT. OF EDUCATION

The V.I. Dept. of Education Tuesday night said that the 13th Annual Governor's Summer Reading Challenge is well underway. The program challenges the territory's students in grades K-6 to read five or more books during the summer months, now through Sept. 3. The literacy initiative was first started during the de Jongh administration and is sponsored by the Office of the Governor and the V.I. Department of Education.

In a video released online to encourage students to take the challenge, Governor Albert Bryan highlighted the experiences students can enjoy through books and expressed his own love of reading.

“One of my favorite things to do is read,” he said. “A good story can fuel the imagination and introduce you to places and characters you’ve never seen or heard of before.” He further encouraged students to meet the Challenge by reading books from their home libraries or to download free ebooks online, according to the release.

Assistant Education Commissioner Victor Somme III, whose office oversees the administration of the Summer Reading Challenge for the Department of Education, highlighted the importance of engaging students in literacy year ‘round.

“The annual Reading Challenge offers a great opportunity for us to continue engaging students at these critical grade levels while they are away from school for the summer,” he said. “During this time, children tend to experience some learning loss, so keeping this fun, learning activity alive is important to stemming some of that learning loss. Not to mention, it is a great way for students to learn about their culture and rich Caribbean heritage through the books they read.”

Before schools closed in May for the 2021 summer break, students in kindergarten through sixth grades attending the Territory’s public and non-public schools received a packet of up to three books to kick off their summer reading.

D.O.E. said while the Summer Reading Challenge is a national initiative with participation from states and governors across the nation, in the Virgin Islands, students receive books written and illustrated by Virgin Islands’ or Caribbean authors and illustrators. Some titles from the 2021 Reading Challenge include “Kallaloo,” written by David and Phillis Gershator, “Malcolm & the Money Tree,” written by Eudora Esdaille-Richardson, and “Footprints Into the Sunrise,” written by Alscess Lewis-Brown.

A major component of the annual challenge is the culminating activity, dubbed the “Big Celebration,” that students who completed the challenge are invited to attend. At the event, which features food, fun activities, games, music and more, individual students and schools that read the most books win special prizes.

According to the release, in order to successfully complete the challenge, students are required to keep track of the books they read by recording them on tracking sheets provided online. On Sept. 3, when the Challenge ends, students should submit their tracking sheets to their classroom teachers.

To learn more about the 2021 Governor’s Summer Reading Challenge, download tracking sheets and sign up to receive free ebooks from the Library of Congress, visit www.readfive.org.

