



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **ST. CROIX SCHOOLS CLOSE OUT HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH WITH FOOD, MUSIC AND CULTURAL PRIDE**

ST. CROIX, USVI - The St. Croix Educational Complex and St. Croix Central high schools, along with Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with exciting activities featuring traditional Spanish foods, music and cultural presentations.

St. Croix Educational Complex High School Spanish teacher and Foreign Language Arts Chairperson Chaselle McConnell spearheaded the school's activities. Throughout the month of October, she organized a traditional Spanish breakfast, sip-and-paint activity, luncheon and a movie featuring the film, "A Better Life."

McConnell recreated a student-friendly version of the popular sip-and-paint art event with cider, crackers and cheese while students painted a traditional Mexican sugar skull.

For the luncheon, students gathered in the cafeteria to eat Spanish dishes, learn Spanish dances and enjoy music provided by Charles "Pollo" Goodings, Jr., of Marvelous Sounds, who is also an English teacher at the school.

Student Anthony Marden Borough, Jr., won the high school's Hispanic Heritage Month poster contest, earning him a certificate and gift card from McConnell and Amauri Contreras, a foreign language arts teacher.

Zulma Torres, Central High English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and McConnell's mother, celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month at the school with a breakfast and exhibition featuring Taino symbols and Mexican sugar skulls made by students. This is the third year Torres and Central High's ESL teachers have hosted the activity to commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month.

On October 17, Pearl B. Larsen Elementary combined its Hispanic Heritage Month celebration with its Positive Behavioral Initiative Support (PBIS) rollout for the 2018-19 school year.

Class presentations for Hispanic Heritage Month included a Spanish nursery rhyme by Kindergarteners; first graders presented “A Symbol of Peru”; fifth grade students recited the poem, “Family Day” in English and Spanish; and sixth grade students recited a Puerto Rico/Virgin Islands Friendship poem.

In recognition of PBIS, Pearl B. Larsen second graders sang, “We Will Be Swimming for Success”; sixth grade students recited a poem titled, “Respect” and presented a skit highlighting the school’s PBIS expectations: respect yourself, respect others and respect your environment.

“Good behavior or positive behavior is not just for school, it’s for everywhere,” said Avril Mailard, Larsen’s PBIS team leader. “Wherever you go, positive behavior is expected. What you are practicing now is going to be with you for the rest of your life.”

Throughout the assembly, students gave musical performances under the direction of Music Instructor Monica Casey. “Habemos Lleado,” a Puerto Rican folk song, featured a group of sixth grade students playing various instruments. Each student was featured in a solo.

Assistant Principal Delicia Espinosa encouraged students to celebrate the diverse cultures of the students attending the school.

“I hope everyone enjoyed Hispanic Heritage Month,” she said. “It was a time that we spent reflecting on the contributions of Hispanics in our local community. Please continue to respect the different cultures and people who are attending Pearl B. Larsen and do live in our community. It is important that we maintain respect and acknowledge each other’s differences.”

PBIS Coach Yolande Green praised Larsen’s PBIS presentation.

“It was great to see how the Dolphins ‘swam to success’ for this PBIS roll out,” she said.

PBIS is established by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education to emphasize “school-wide systems of support that include proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments.” The Virgin Islands Department of Education’s State Office of Special Education implements PBIS policies for the school districts.

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