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KERRA SAMUEL NAMED 2019 VIRGIN ISLANDS STATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR

ST. THOMAS, USVI -- Kerra Samuel, intermediate computer lab teacher at Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School and recently named 2018-19 St. Croix District Teacher of the Year, has emerged as the 2019 Virgin Islands State Teacher of the Year, topping 2018-19 St. Thomas-St. John District Teacher of the Year Shernore Prince of Joseph Sibilly Elementary School.

“It is indeed a great honor to be named the 2019 Virgin Islands State Teacher,” Samuel said. “Hard work and determination truly does pay off. It proves that teaching is not about all the resources you have, it’s about putting your best foot forward despite challenges or obstacles.”

State Teacher candidates, comprised of the two district teachers, undergo an extensive vetting process that includes a classroom observation session to assess the teachers’ skill level in the following categories: creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture of learning, managing classroom procedures, managing student behavior, organizing physical space, communicating with students, using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, using assessment in instruction, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness.

Commissioner of Education Sharon Ann McCollum, PhD, praised Samuel’s accomplishment.

“Ms. Samuel represents the best of the caliber and passion our educators have for the profession of teaching and for public education,” she said. “I am confident in her ability to represent the Virgin Islands both locally and on the national level, and look forward to working closely with her in the coming months. I extend my congratulations to Ms. Samuel and all of the Territory’s dedicated teachers.”

During Samuel's one-year tenure, which will run through November 2019, she will represent the Virgin Islands public education system on a national scale and plans to champion the system's continued access to federal funding, among other causes.

"It is crucial that our public education system continues to receive federal funding, which helps maintain programs and mandates," she said. "Teachers need to continuously utilize the resources they do have to ensure the growth of our students, as well as program fidelity. Many times, teachers don't use the programs enough and data is compromised when this happens."

As for the Territory's public education system, Samuel said it's "in fair shape," but have lacked necessary resources since the 2017 hurricanes. She looks forward to learning more about educational initiatives that have been successful in other communities and bringing those ideas back home.

"I am elated and so excited to visit abroad, and take a walk in other educational facilities and bring back knowledge that I have gained for the betterment of our islands," she said. "Growing and learning have always been my number one focus. When educators continue our quest for knowledge, it trickles down to those little individuals who someday will be the ones running the beautiful islands we call home."

Samuel solicits the community's support of public education.

"I want the community to know how dedicated and trained our staff is, and that children are receiving an adequate education while in [our] public school system," she said. "There is also a grave need for our community partners to help schools in any way they can. Whether they help donate technology to the schools, sponsor a field trip or coordinate sessions with students to develop their entrepreneurial skills."

As part of her official duties, Samuel will visit Washington, D.C. next spring for meetings and activities geared toward recognizing the nation's top teachers.

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