



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## **STUDENTS IGNITE THEIR MINDS THROUGH INNOVATIONS AND EXPLORATIONS AT STEAM DAY**

ST. THOMAS, USVI – Over 300 students from public, private, and parochial schools in the St. Thomas-St. John (STTJ) District participated STEAM Day at the UVI Sports and Fitness Center on Friday, May 24. This year's theme, "Igniting Minds through Innovations and Explorations," yielded an assortment of challenges and activities in all areas of STEAM, created by STTJ District Coordinators, local businesses and organizations.

According to Deputy Superintendent Dr. Symra Dee Brown, the educational fun day served up content-based challenges for students in grades 4-8 in an attempt to invert the traditional approach to cognitive learning.

"The highest level of learning takes place when one is synthesizing, building, and creating things, and that's where we want to begin when teaching our students," explained Dr. Brown. "We are changing the outlook on how we engage students in active learning here in the Virgin Islands."

Students rotated through various stations and worked on a variety of STEAM challenges such as the Hurricane Challenge led by St. Thomas-St. John District Science Coordinator Gerald Walters. STEAM Day attendees worked in teams to build a structure using straws, Popsicle sticks, tape, and paper that would be able to hold up a tennis ball in hurricane weather conditions without

falling. Each team received points based on teamwork, the height of their structure, and how the structure stood up when exposed to wind and water. The team from Addelita Cancryn Junior High School secured the win with a structure that stood 39cm tall, while All Saints Cathedral School came in second with 22cm.

The activities encouraged students to use content they've already learned in the classroom in new and exciting ways, according to St. Thomas- St. John District Mathematics Coordinator Avon Benjamin.

“In this workshop students used their knowledge of the rate of change, known as slope, to track the speed and direction of their movement using a sensor to detect their movement,” began Mr. Benjamin. “The students were confident in their knowledge of the formulas and graphs, which was a pleasant surprise even to their teachers. However, to succeed, students needed to analyze how the rate of change (slope) is altered on the graph based on motion rather than just being able to regurgitate formulas and theorems,” he explained.

Community organizations and businesses such as the University of the Virgin Islands Marine Science Department, VIEPSCOR, Coral World, VI Eco-Schools, My Brother's Workshop, the jeniusLogic Foundation, and WAPA offered additional presentations and workshops to keep students engaged.

The St. Thomas-St. John District Technology and STEAM Day Coordinator Kisha Corbett extends an invitation to anyone in STEAM industries to partner with the district and help to teach the students how STEAM is integrated into the everyday life and business of the Virgin Islands.

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