



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## **STTJ DISTRICT TEACHERS RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS PRESIDENTIAL AWARD IN MATH, SCIENCE**

*Teachers honored in Washington, D.C. with presidential citation and \$10,000 award*

ST. THOMAS, USVI – Shernore Prince, a third grade math teacher at Joseph Sibilly Elementary School, and Crystal Vanterpool-Richardson, a science teacher at Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School, were recent recipients of the prestigious Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) for 2018 and 2017, respectively, topping teachers from other U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa.

The St. Thomas-St. John District teachers travelled to Washington, D.C., October 15-19 to be recognized along with other math and science teachers from the 50 states. Each awardee received a citation signed by President Trump and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The PAEMST program, administered by the NSF on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, recognizes outstanding teachers for their contributions to the teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and/or computer science, according to NSF.

Prince and Vanterpool-Richardson's awards were officially announced by the NSF in October 2019 due to a White House back log from 2016. Prince was nominated and applied for the award in 2017 and Vanterpool-Richardson in 2016.

Prince, the 2018-2019 St. Thomas-St. John District Teacher of the Year, is now in her eighth year of teaching at Sibilly Elementary, where she has taught both third and sixth grade math and science. She said being a PAEMST recipient confirms she is on the right career path.

"I was detoured many times, but never denied an opportunity to pursue a teaching career," she said. "I feel blessed and filled with gratitude to receive the Presidential Award. Receiving this award recognizes me for

my hard work and dedication...to a profession that I love. I am thankful for those who have supported me, encouraged me, and contributed to my goals and classroom needs.”

Prince said she is further motivated in her commitment to student success.

“We must give all students the opportunity to succeed,” she said. “I see this award being used to the benefit of my students by me applying even greater rigor to my lessons and students being able to meet that rigor.”

Prince, who works closely with her Sibilly Elementary colleagues to share ideas and feedback on instruction, data and other school-related matters, said while her focus will always remain on her students, she looks forward to eventually moving out of the classroom into a district role that would allow her to use her skills to benefit more students in the district.

Vanterpool-Richardson, who has been teaching secondary science (Earth, space, life and physical sciences) for nine years, likened the award to that of receiving a medal of honor.

“That medal honor displays the outstanding professional growth in your career, continuous improvement through professional development, and the commitment to developing students’ skills based on their specific learning style,” she said, adding, “It is exciting to have received this recognition in my career as a science teacher. It reminds me that I am growing as a teacher and when I grow professionally, my students will grow academically.”

Vanterpool-Richardson said she is most gratified when her students have an “Aha moment,” a term used to describe an instance of “sudden insight or discovery.”

“I want to see Virgin Islands’ students grown in their love for science and to recognize the connection between science and math,” she said. “There are so many career options students have available to them through science and math.”

Vanterpool-Richardson describes herself as a team player and looks forward to continuing to network with her colleagues at BCB “so we can help and motivate each other to push further for the benefit of our students.”

Prince was nominated by Avon Benjamin, district math coordinator and Vanterpool-Richardson was nominated by former BCB principal, Dr. Merlene Jones, who is the current Sibilly Elementary principal. The teachers underwent an extensive application process, which included submitting a 30-minute video lesson. They say now that they have gone through the process, they plan to nominate and encourage other colleagues to apply for the respected award.

“I want to see our territory become more involved in this national award and recognition,” Prince said.

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