



## THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## **St. Thomas-St. John District to Showcase Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Practices at 33rd Annual Model Schools Conference**

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) is proud to announce that representatives from the St. Thomas-St. John (STTJ) District will present at the 33rd Annual Model Schools Conference, scheduled for June 22–25, 2025. The national conference brings together passionate educators and thought leaders who are transforming schools and student outcomes through bold and innovative practices.

One of the themes for this year's conference is *Restoring Wholeness: Healing and Empowering Youth After Crisis*, which aligns closely with the work being done in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The STTJ District team will present a compelling session titled "*Holistic Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Approach – Supporting Students & Teams.*" Leading the session will be STTJ District Director of Professional Development, Michealrose Ravalier, with STTJ District Insular Superintendent Dr. Stefan Jürgen and Deputy Superintendent Dr. Symra Brown-Gumbs serving as co-presenters.

The STTJ District's presentation will spotlight how social-emotional learning has been systematically embedded at every level, prioritizing the emotional and mental well-being of students and staff. Rooted in the Territory's resilience through multiple crises including two Category 5 hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic, the district's SEL framework is a model for transformative recovery and sustainable educational growth. Key Highlights of the presentation include:

- **Trauma-Informed District Response:** A foundational overview of how natural disasters and global health challenges catalyzed the district's renewed emphasis on SEL for both students and educators.
- **Student Voice through the *Overcoming* Anthology:** A student-authored literary collection that captures personal narratives of trauma, strength, and healing giving voice to the youth of the Virgin Islands.
  - *View book promo:* [https://youtu.be/my9Sf4\\_RDkM](https://youtu.be/my9Sf4_RDkM)
- **Staff Wellness & Adult SEL:** Initiatives such as *Wellness Wednesdays*, mobile *Zen Van* visits, and reflective journaling have created a culture of care and support for educators and school staff.

The Model Schools Conference is one of the largest gatherings of school and district leaders dedicated to improving outcomes and fostering positive school cultures. The VIDE team's participation reaffirms the Territory's commitment to holistic, student-centered practices and positions the U.S. Virgin Islands as a national leader in educational recovery and transformation.

For more information about the conference, visit [www.modelschoolsconference.com](http://www.modelschoolsconference.com).

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