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Virgin Islands Department of Education Congratulates 2027-2028 State Teacher of the Year Ms. Joanie Phillip of the St. Croix District

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) proudly announces Ms. Joanie Phillip, a sixth-grade teacher at Ricardo Richards Elementary School, as the 2027–2028 State Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made during a special recognition ceremony held on Saturday, June 6, 2026, at Government House on St. Croix.

Ms. Phillip, the St. Croix District Teacher of the Year, was honored alongside Ms. Jessica Sibilly, the St. Thomas–St. John District Teacher of the Year, as the Territory's top finalists for this prestigious honor. Both educators were recognized for their exceptional commitment to student achievement, instructional excellence, and public education in the Virgin Islands.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington praised both finalists during the ceremony, stating, "This evening, we honored two educators who embody both leadership and heart. They lead with light by setting an example of excellence, innovation, and professionalism. They teach with heart by nurturing not only academic growth, but also character, confidence, and hope. The State Teacher of the Year represents the very best of our profession. We are honored to recognize Ms. Phillip as the 2027–2028 State Teacher of the Year and are incredibly proud of the impact she continues to make each and every day."

The event brought together distinguished guests from across the Territory, including The Honorable Tregenza A. Roach, Esq., Lieutenant Governor of the Virgin Islands; Senators Carla Joseph and Novelle Francis of the 36th Legislature; members of the Governor's Cabinet and senior staff; members of the Virgin Islands Board of Education; and members of the Virgin Islands Department of Education's senior leadership team and staff.

Throughout the evening, both finalists received well-deserved accolades, awards, gifts, and tokens of appreciation in recognition of their dedication to educating and inspiring students in the Virgin Islands. As this year's State Teacher of the Year, Ms. Phillip will enjoy a sponsored cruise vacation. In a memorable highlight of the ceremony, Ms. Phillip was formally crowned and presented with a sash, symbolizing her selection for the Territory's highest teaching honor.

As the 2027–2028 State Teacher of the Year, Ms. Phillip will serve as an ambassador for the teaching profession, representing the Virgin Islands Department of Education at official events and initiatives while advocating for her educational platform “Show Up and Read.” Ms. Phillips highlighted the connection between chronic absenteeism and lower student literacy by saying, “Students show greater engagement when they can connect attendance to their reading goals, track their progress, and take pride in their growth. I hope we continue to see attendance, not just as compliance, but as an issue of equity. Students deserve the chance to develop strong literacy skills that lay the foundation for future academic success. When students show up, literacy grows. When literacy grows, confidence follows. And when confidence follows, opportunities expand.”

Ms. Phillip's recognition as State Teacher of the Year is a celebration of her outstanding contributions to public education and her unwavering commitment to shaping the future of the Virgin Islands, one student at a time. The VIDE extends its deepest gratitude to the judges, sponsors, supporters, contributors, and all who helped make this memorable celebration possible.

At the Virgin Islands Department of Education, we are *public school proud* and today, we are especially proud of Ms. Joanie Phillip. Congratulations on this extraordinary achievement!

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