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ST. CROIX STUDENTS LEARN GOOD DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

ST. CROIX, USVI - In honor of Digital Citizenship Week, celebrated October 15 to 19, 2018, Virgin Islands Department of Education, St. Croix District Technology Coordinator Dr. Ryan Everett shed some light on the ways students can be good digital citizens, as well as creative ways students could use technology when resources are limited.

"Digital Citizenship Week is about promoting and teaching students how to be good digital citizens by using digital tools correctly," Ryan explained.

Digital Citizenship Week is spearheaded by the International Society of Technology and Education (ITSE), which teaches how to correctly use technology and focus on integration of technology and media.

According to the ITSE Digital Citizen standards, "students recognize the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of living, learning and working in an interconnected digital world, and they act and model ways that are safe, legal and ethical."

Ryan shared ways in which students can use the Internet safely, legally and ethically.

"Students have to know the difference between sharing private and personal information," he said. "Private information consists of your name, age, address, date of birth, and social security number, whereas personal information tells your likes and interests, such as going to a concert, watching a movie, playing a sport. It's okay to share your personal information, but never your private information."

Ryan elaborated on unethical usage of technology.

"When you download people's pictures, work or videos online then take credit for it as your own or don't credit them at all, you're not using technology ethically," he said. "It's not right to use something without giving the proper credits or reference."

Ryan also said hacking and creating viruses in others' accounts constitute unethical use of technology.

"Students have to understand that hacking and creating viruses can result in harsh consequences," he said. "By doing these things, you are not using technology in a legal manner."

Although many of the schools in the district lack technological resources, Dr. Ryan has introduced ways to keep digital citizenship and literacy afloat.

"What I've been doing is focusing on unplugged exercises," he said. "These exercises help [students] have good digital literacy and digital citizenship, even if they don't have a computer. By allowing students to participate in unplugged exercises, they can approach hands-on activities to understand how computers think and how to approach problems through computational thinking."

One of the exercises he has introduced at schools in the St. Croix District is binary bracelets, which helps students understand binary decoding.

"In computer language, every character on your keyboard consists of eight separate bits bytes," Ryan began, "so to make up one character, you need eight bits bytes.

"Students have to find what eight bits bytes make up the first letter of their name. When they do, they color in the pattern and cut the bracelet out and wear it. By studying the binary decoding key, they can understand and read codes," he said.

As far as his goals for the school year, Ryan said, "we want students to not only be consumers of technology, but creators of technology."

"It's fine to play games, but what if we teach you how to create your own game using programs, such as Scratch Programing that teaches parents and students all about coding, there is even Scratch Jr. for ages 4-8 that allows them to create basic animation, games and interactive stories," he added.

"By exposing our [students] to this from early, we're putting them in a position to aspire to be the creators, to be a software developer or game developer in the future," Ryan continued. "Digital and technological platforms, cell phones, tablets, and social media surround us. Everything we do involves some kind of technology."

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