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CENTRAL HIGH'S JOSEPH BESS NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AS TERRITORY'S FIRST ACHIEVE3000 PRO EDUCATOR

Bess praised for fostering positive student outcomes through his innovative approach to literacy instruction

ST. CROIX, USVI -- St. Croix Central High School (CHS) 11th and 12th Grade AP English Teacher Joseph Bess has been nationally recognized as an Achieve3000 PRO Educator, the first in the Territory, by literacy instruction platform Achieve3000 for his use of the online system "with the greatest consistency, innovation, and dedication to yield the most incredible literacy growth for each and every student."

Stuart Udell, CEO of Achieve3000, explains the intent of the PRO Educator initiative.

"With the majority of fourth and eighth grade students across the U.S. falling below proficient levels in reading on the NAEP assessment, Achieve3000 believes these teachers deserve to be celebrated and highlighted as national models of high-quality, highly effective literacy instruction," he said. "Congratulations to St. Croix Central High School and Bess for supporting and nurturing these professional, resourceful, and outstanding educators. We are proud to call you our partners."

Bess, who began teaching at Central High in 2017, got his start with Achieve3000 in 2011 while teaching in Washington, D.C. He explained that the platform--made available to the Territory's K-12 English Language Arts, Science, and Biology teachers through district-paid subscriptions--tracks students' Lexile scores, the primary indicator of students' reading comprehension levels.

Students are given access to articles on current events, cutting-edge research and other categories with varying levels of difficulty based on their Lexile score.

Bess regularly incorporates the technology in his classroom, primarily using it during the second semester as a reading comprehension booster for students preparing for the AP test.

“If you use the program with accuracy, you can boost the Lexile score,” Bess said. “The goal is to have students jump in levels.”

According to Bess, the ideal Lexile score for students in grades 11 and 12 is 1150-1450. He noted that a recent CHS valedictorian earned a score of 1600, which is a good indicator the student will perform well in reading comprehension at the college level.

Another benefit of Achieve3000, Bess pointed out, is that based on students’ Lexile scores, the system offers projected careers that might be compatible for them.

“In order to have buy-in for Achieve3000, students have to feel like there is a benefit to them,” he said.

Bess praised his students for the recognition.

“I won’t have this recognition if it wasn’t for them,” he said. “I’m proud that my students see me as a caring educator and so they work hard. The program helps me make it possible for them to learn, and I appreciate that I have been viewed as a teacher who takes his students’ scores and content seriously.”

Bess is currently introducing rising ninth graders enrolled in Central High’s Summer Bridge program to the Achieve3000 platform. He encourages his fellow high school English Language Arts, Science and Biology teachers to use the system regularly in order to see its benefits.

“Don’t use it just for extra-credit, but use it to help students read and comprehend,” he concluded.

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