



STTJ District Teacher of the Year
2021



USVI State Teacher of the Year
2022

Cristina Marie Lope-Senosa

International Teacher, Philippines

US Virgin Islands State Teacher of the Year 2022

St. Thomas-St. John District Teacher of the Year 2021

IEKHS Teacher of the Year 2020

Social Studies Teacher

Ivanna Eudora Kean High School

I am a great believer that a school has a major influence in our lives. It is where we spend the majority of our time and it is where our second home is. We develop our intra and interpersonal relationships in school more often than in any other place. It is also the venue where we have been honed, groomed, and influenced by our second guardians, our so-called: teachers.

I affirm that education defines civilization. It is the rock that stands guard between man and ignorance. To teach is to touch a life; to be a teacher is the most selfless way for a person to let his legacy live on forever. Teaching is the most adventurous, challenging, yet rewarding profession of all time. When we teach, we go into an adventure of discovering beautiful minds and of finding the best ways to let them see the amazing things that they are capable of. As we go on further on this ‘adventure’, we soon find out that there are numerous circumstances to face and that it takes real character and strength to build trust for a healthy relationship to thrive. In the end, however, the struggles and sacrifices are worth their price. For every teacher, to see their students become the best version of themselves is the greatest honor in life.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to havoc the world and online learning made most educators question the treacherous journey of teaching, for me it is a blessing in disguise. Two Virtual Awarding Ceremonies for the District and State Teacher of the Year!

Each school in St. Thomas-St. John District comprised of 17 schools from elementary, middle and high school level submitted their respective school’s TOY (Teacher of the Year) based on nomination process and deliberation by the selection committee of their respective schools. I received my Teacher of the Year memo on May 23, 2020 from the office of our Acting Principal, Alicia Leerdam. The office of the Insular Superintendent Dr. Stefan V. Jürgen then sent a congratulatory remarks for the five finalists who made it to the top with our portfolio submission. Then the five of us were judged according to the following criteria:

- Packet submission that details the candidate’s personal track record, accomplishments, awards, and essay question answers.
- Lesson Demonstration
- Face to face interview

On November 10, 2020, I was announced as the first International teacher to win the prestigious award. I was given a plaque as our St. Thomas-St. John District's ambassadress of excellence.

The State Teacher of the Year Committee headed by Dr. Shamika Williams, VIDE Director of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) in full swing began the selection process that is strenuous and rigorous but it was a humble experience. Ultimately, the Virgin Islands' State Teacher of the Year is the one who epitomizes the virtues of care and compassion, citizenry, and one who transcends the art of teaching.

The candidates from STTJ and St. Croix District received the selection criteria, list of deadlines, and program requirements on January 21, 2021. We were judged from the packet/portfolio with evidences, lesson demonstration, advocacy/platform presentation and interview by the distinguished panel of adjudicators from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), American Institute of Research (AIR), Educational Testing Service (ETS), and Research Advisers locally and in the national level. On May 10, 2021 I was announced as the US Virgin Islands State Teacher of the Year 2022. Again, the Commissioner of Education publicized that I made history being the first International Teacher to win the auspicious honor. The State Teacher of the Year or STOY is the highest award given in each/every state to an educator in the United States. It was a supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, surreal feeling and I thank God for the divine guidance and wisdom for giving the said award in my favor.

After being selected as the Virgin Islands' State Teacher of the Year, I will serve as a candidate for the National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) and compete against teachers from all 50 states, DC, the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and three other U.S. territories. Locally, as the State Teacher of the Year I will participate in a year of relevant, meaningful, and impactful activities. Such activities include but are not limited to providing professional development to new and struggling teachers throughout the territory, attending conferences and workshops, platform promotion, and serving on educational policy committees.

Thus, VIDE will ensure that I, as the 2021/2022 State Teacher of the Year will function as an expert in the field, an innovative teacher leader, one who recognizes the importance of school culture and community partnership, and one who is expressive, engaging and articulate; a teacher who will rise to the top as an “Educational Ambassador for the Virgin Islands.”

To close, teaching is not always a moment of glory. There are also dark days on being a teacher; it is not about perfection, but a calling that I have been very proud of. Being recognized as a State Teacher of the Year in the USVI is beyond my expectation. It is a cherry on the cake that I will always be thankful for a lifetime.