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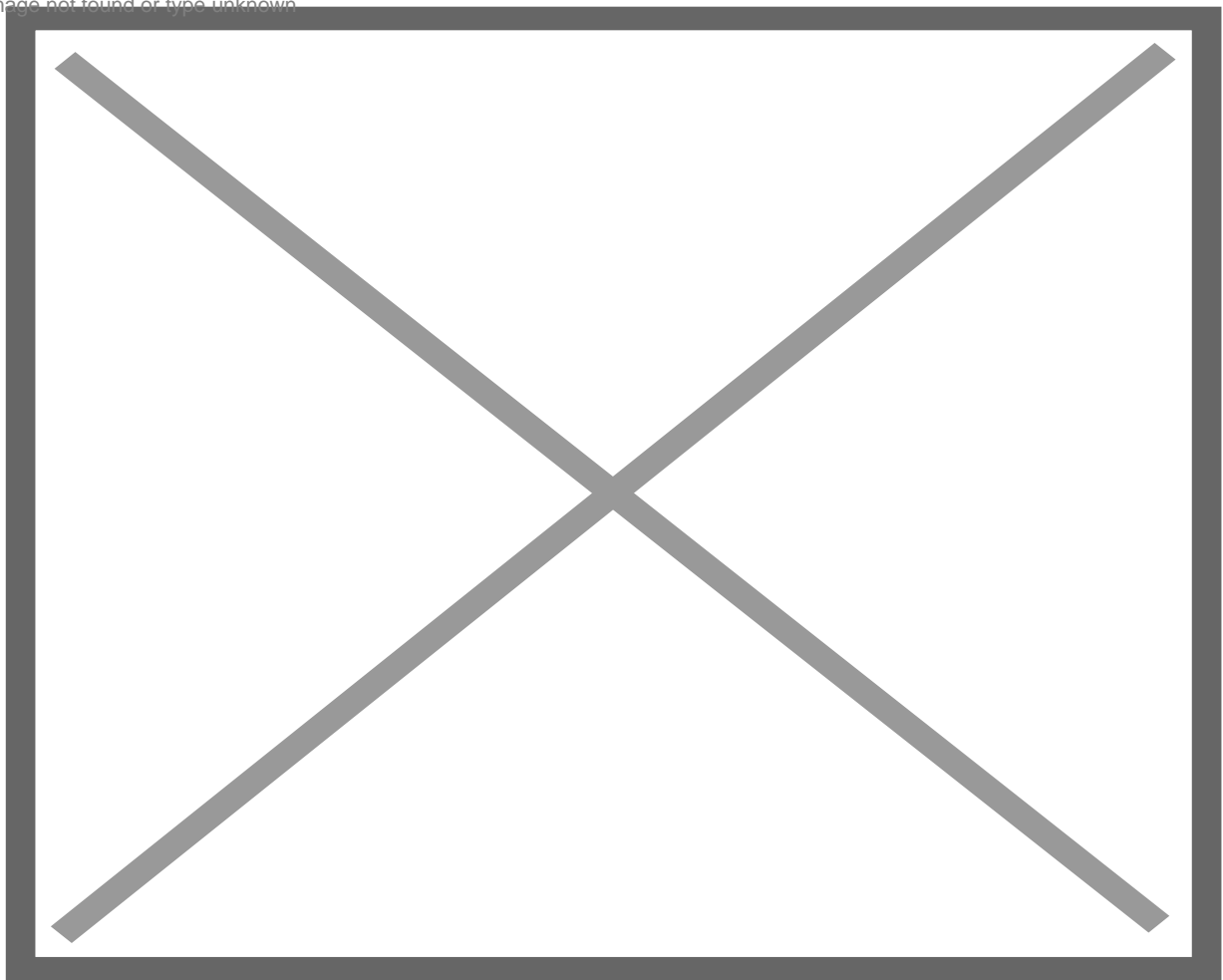
Lockhart Closes Early as Surprise Job Action Grips School; Assault and Threats Against Teachers by Students Contributed, AFT Says

Unannounced walkout triggers early dismissal amidst reports of student misconduct towards staff

Education / **Published On March 13, 2024 01:41 PM /**

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VIPD officers supervise as school buses and parents or guardians collect students in an organized manner. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. THOMAS — A job action at the Lockhart K-8 School on St. Thomas has led to the early dismissal of students in grades 4-8, a situation that caused a domino effect of disruptions affecting parents and guardians.

According to the V.I. Dept. of Education, the disruption was due to "instructional interruptions caused by a teacher job action, non-sanctioned by the American Federation of Teachers Local 1825."

Educational officials instructed parents and guardians to meet their students at the school as soon as possible, and said that students who rely on school buses utilize this service.

The department said students in grades K-3rd will remain on campus for regular school operations until 2:45 p.m., and stressed that "only 4th to 8th grade students are being dismissed."

St. Thomas Police Chief Steven Phillip told the Consortium that officers were deployed at the school to oversee an orderly dismissal. He said American Federation of Teachers and Education officials were meeting to discuss today's walkout and protest.

While the department did not specify the cause of the job action, parents reported to the Consortium that serious threats made by some students against teachers contributed to the work stoppage. Chief Phillip acknowledged hearing talk of these incidents, though no official reports have been filed with the V.I. Police Department.

However, St. Thomas-St. John District AFT President Leontyne Jones told the Consortium that the job action was precipitated by several events, including lack of communication between teachers and the administrative leadership, infrastructure deficiencies, and teacher safety. "Some students had either threatened or assaulted some teachers," Ms. Jones said. Even so, she revealed that the matter was resolved and that teachers would be present at school on Thursday.