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Concrete Pours as Arthur A. Richards PreK-8 School Marks Construction Milestone

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The V.I. Department of Education on Wednesday celebrated a significant construction milestone at the new Arthur A. Richards PreK-8 School site. D.O.E. Commissioner Dionne Wells-Hedrington proudly announced that the first concrete pour has begun, signaling a crucial phase in the development of this landmark project.

"We witnessed the groundbreaking of this site on February 23rd of this year. Today's concrete pour represents a significant leap forward," she said. "Constructing a new school in the District of St. Croix is monumental for the territory. It has been decades since such a significant educational development has taken place."

The commissioner expressed her gratitude for the collective efforts of all partners involved in the project. "Our students deserve new schools, and it's high time this became a reality," she added. Key partners in this ambitious initiative include the New Schools Construction Advisory Board, MCN Build, the DLR Group, Witt O'Brien's, the Office of Disaster Recovery, FEMA, VITEMA, VIHFA, the Department of Public Works, and the Department of Education staff, including Architect Chaneel Callwood-Daniels.

The previous Arthur A. Richards Jr. High School was severely damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, necessitating its demolition. The new school, a sprawling \$163 million project, will offer state-of-the-art learning spaces spanning 145,000 sq. ft. It will be relocated to the former site of the Evelyn M. Williams Elementary School.

Mrs. Wells-Hedrigton emphasized that this project goes beyond mere reconstruction. "We aim to transform the lives of our students, acknowledging the pivotal role that appropriate facilities play in shaping them as our future leaders," she stated. "This school will set new standards for 21st-century learning spaces in the U.S. Virgin Islands."

The design-build contractor, MCN Build, revealed the school's proposed design, which will be completed in three phases:

- Phase 1: Utility building, gym (also serving as a shelter), PreK building, and the commons building.
- Phase 2: K-5 building A, K-5 building B, and the Administrative building.
- Phase 3: The final phase includes the 6-8 middle school building, hardscape, landscape, and a multi-purpose field.

Additionally, the project will feature an underground cistern with a 250,000-gallon capacity and retaining walls on the west and northwest sides of the property. The next significant stage involves laying the foundation for the utility building.