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35 Teachers Stage Sick-Out at St. Croix Educational Complex Amid 90-Degree Classroom Heat and Other Concerns

School closes as teachers protest against ongoing concerns, including unbearable temperatures in classrooms without air conditioning

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School buses lined the entrance of the St. Croix Educational Complex to transport students back home following a teacher job action. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Teachers at the St. Croix Educational Complex staged what the V.I. Department of Education is calling a "coordinated teacher sick-out" on Wednesday, with reports suggesting that unbearable

heat in classrooms was a key factor in their decision to act. Classrooms without air conditioning reportedly reached temperatures above 90 degrees, prompting frustrations that have resurfaced since last year.

School buses lined the entrance of the St. Croix Educational Complex, but instead of delivering students to a day of learning, they awaited students to take them back home after VIDE ordered the school closed for the day. According to the department, up to 35 teachers reported being unable to attend class, prompting an immediate assessment that found the remaining staff insufficient to sustain normal operations. As a result, the decision was taken to close school for the day.

Tameika Phillipus, newly-elected president of the American Federation for Teachers St. Croix District, stated that union leaders had no advance knowledge of the sick-out. When contacted by the Consortium on Wednesday morning, she disclosed that she was in St. Thomas for a meeting with the Commissioner of Education. However, Phillipus confirmed that unbearable heat in classrooms has been a recurring complaint from teachers at the St. Croix Educational Complex.



School buses transported students back to their homes following a teacher job action on Wed. Oct. 2, 2024 at the St. Croix Educational Complex High School. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

This morning's meeting will feature a discussion on working conditions in classrooms across St. Croix, Phillipus said. The Department of Education, in its statement, acknowledged the concerns raised by teachers and expressed a commitment to addressing them "with a spirit of collaboration and understanding."

The issue of stifling classroom temperatures is not new. Last September, VIDE [adjusted school hours on St. Croix](#) after students and teachers at both the St. Croix Educational Complex and St. Croix Central High School protested the unbearable conditions. At that time, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. [blamed the situation on climate change](#) but criticized the teacher walkout for harming students.

With no similar adjustments made this year, it remains unclear what measures, if any, have been implemented by the Department of Education to mitigate the heat issues at the St. Croix Educational Complex since last year's protests.

