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Dept. of Education Adjusts High Schools' Schedules on St. Croix After Teacher Sick-Out Over Extreme Classroom Heat

VIDE implemented an abbreviated schedule for St. Croix's public high schools following a coordinated teacher sick-out. The action, involving 35 teachers, was spurred by extreme classroom temperatures exceeding 90 degrees

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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. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. THOMAS — Following a coordinated teacher sick-out on Wednesday, the V.I. Department of Education announced a modified schedule for St. Croix's two largest high schools due to ongoing concerns over extreme classroom temperatures. The sick-out, which saw 35 teachers absent from the St. Croix Educational Complex (SCEC), was [spurred by unbearable heat in classrooms](#), with temperatures exceeding 90 degrees in some areas.

VIDE responded to the job action by temporarily closing the St. Croix Educational Complex and assessing staff levels. Insufficient personnel led to a decision to send students home for the day. In light of these events, VIDE announced an abbreviated schedule for both the St. Croix Educational Complex High School and St. Croix Central High School, effective Thursday, October 3. The Career and Technical Center will also adhere to the revised timetable. This new schedule, designed to mitigate the impact of classroom heat, will remain in place until further notice.

New School Schedule

The adjusted daily schedule is as follows:

- 1st Period: 7:40 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.
- 2nd Period: 8:50 a.m. – 9:55 a.m.
- 3rd Period: 10:00 a.m. – 11:05 a.m.
- 4th Period: 11:10 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
- Lunch: 12:20 p.m. – 1:05 p.m.
- Dismissal: 1:05 p.m.

Bus transportation will continue for students utilizing school buses, and lunch services will be available during the modified schedule.

The sick-out brought to the fore growing frustrations among teachers about the extreme heat inside non-air-conditioned classrooms. Tameika Phillipus, president of the American Federation of Teachers St. Croix District, acknowledged that unbearable heat has been a long-standing issue at the St. Croix Educational Complex. Phillipus, who was in St. Thomas at the time of the sick-out, expressed that union leaders had no advance notice of the action but noted that heat-related complaints have been ongoing.

VIDE, while recognizing the concerns raised by teachers, said it had already begun addressing the situation prior to the sick-out. In a statement, the department mentioned that its Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance had initiated electrical assessments, repairs, and upgrades across the district. Efforts included the installation of air conditioning units and additional fans in affected classrooms.

Education officials said the department would ensure that the adjustments do not disrupt student learning, especially given the potential for learning loss. "Ensuring consistent classroom attendance is critical to reducing learning loss, which can severely impact student success," the department said in its statement. The new schedule will remain in effect until further notice.

The department faced a [similar situation last year](#), and at that time, VIDE acknowledged that the adjustments were not a long-term solution, stating that it was "actively working to improve the operational needs of the schools within the district."