

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Op-Ed: 'Get Your Education,' They Say

Opinion / **Published On June 22, 2015 01:13 PM /**

Staff **June 22, 2015**



In light of [recent talk](#) surrounding the upkeep of the territory's public schools, a compelling article is written by St. Croix Educational Complex 2015 graduate Hannah Rantan, who [periodically writes](#) Op-Eds for The Consortium.

ST. CROIX -- Summer is here and boy are students happy. It wouldn't hurt to have a flashback about a day of school, would it?

Wake up early, (not really), skip breakfast, and if you don't drive, catch the bus. In most cases, the buses are at full capacity. Once at school, you are to wait outside until 7:45 a.m., when the gate opens. Many students arrive there well before that time. Should it rain, you are to huddle underneath the overhead at an elbow's space away from

someone else until the gate is opened.

If you can get past the smell in the hall and open the door to enter, last week's mess is there to greet you. Toilet paper, waste baskets and soap are a myth. - Hannah Rantan.

Getting through the gate, you pass administration and you may or may not receive a "good morning" in return. Taking your seat, you notice trash that has been piling up the past few days, or the smell of a room that had been mopped with dirty water. Drawing your attention upwards, the promethean board may or may not work right, or there may or may not be enough old, torn books to be used.

We could use the internet as reference to solve this problem but, you know, it isn't allowed. Cellphones aren't permitted in school. If you have an emergency, you are to use the office phone. Understandable, but the trouble is having to maneuver your way around an repelling attitude to be allowed to call your parent/guardian.

As the day progresses, you will need to use the bathroom. Here is where the real problem begins. If you can get past the smell in the hall and open the door to enter, last week's mess is there to greet you. Toilet paper, waste baskets and soap are a myth. The details of it is too graphic to include. Its hard to believe this is so, when custodians always seem to be "keeping busy". If you get thirsty without having water of your own, you can brave the fountains that are conveniently placed between these bathrooms, that no one sees being kept up.

Lunchtime rolls around and you'd hope to get to the cafeteria early, where you can receive food that may or may not be fully cooked. You get there to find a mob around the door because they let a few in at a time. A reasonable system to keep things running smoothly, but where is the reason in utilizing only half the room to seat a student body of hundreds, all to be fed in an hour?

No class? I guess you'd like to sit in the library and de-stress from the day, right? Wrong. You are sent to "study hall", the other side of the cafeteria or just outside it where you are welcomed to stand, or sit on the ground until the next period.

The bell rings at the end of the day and you're joyed to go home to grab something to eat or use the bathroom. But there's one remaining obstacle: the bus ride home. There is a term used in school called the '3-man seat'. Since the bus' seats are designed to only fit two students, when the bus is at capacity, a third student is added to make it work. Trouble is, the three students sitting on either side squeezes the middle student so tightly that they literally force-stand for the entire ride -- with no seat beneath their buttocks. This is a method that is common amongst students who have no other way to get home.

These, along with other unspoken challenges are some of the reasons students aren't ecstatic to don a uniform. The mystery of unmotivated students has been solved: students are in no rush or excitement to be in an environment that feels like punishment. Beyond an AYP score, we are students. Beyond students, we are people. People who deserve to have their basic needs met. Change it, and watch attendance and performance rise.

Let it be the goal for incoming and returning students for the school year 2016-2017.

Submitted by:

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