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Bryan Uncertain of Format for School Reopening: 'I Don't Want to Be Responsible for a Pandemic Breakout', but 'Kids Need Individual Attention in School'

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Complex Students during school reopening in September 2015 By. ERNICE GILBERT
FOR VI CONSORTIUM

Governor Albert Bryan said Monday his administration was still working through plans for the upcoming school year. The governor appears to want students back in physical classrooms, stating, "Kids need individual attention in school. It's nice to talk about, but that virtual reality doesn't really work for some of our students who really need the help." But at the same time Mr. Bryan said he does not want to be responsible "for a pandemic breakout in a school or daycare,"

which complicates the administration's strategy as reopening draws nigh.

Mr. Bryan was responding to a Consortium question during his Monday press briefing. He said his administration would take the rest of June to at least come up with a formula on how exactly things will work when learning recommences in August.

"No one has done this before. We're looking at other states, what they have put in place, and then comparing it to the resources and what we have in the Virgin Islands. We just want to get through June because we don't know what's going to happen," Governor Bryan said.

He pointed to the territory's recent reopening following the coronavirus-induced lockdown, the surge in incoming flights to the territory and how that may affect the spread of the deadly pathogen in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"What we've done is we've constructed a broad framework by the Health Commissioner and her team, and now we're integrating [the Dept. of Education] into it and seeing how that breaks down by each school and what we're going to do in terms of allowing students to come back to school," Mr. Bryan said. He expressed concern with the potential of rapid spread among students, stating, "Kids play with one another, and [there's] a level of risk that we want to be able to handle and make parents feel comfortable sending their kids to school."

Yet even as he expressed concern in sending students back to physical classrooms, the governor appeared to suggest that he's not a fan of the remote-learning setup which has been utilized by the Dept. of Education and schools around the world during the pandemic. "School is going to reopen one way or the other," he said. "We're doing our Education plans as we speak to get more technology in here."

The governor spoke of the SAT scores in the USVI, and said he has also paid close attention to [Kids Count](#), which provides a comprehensive annual portrait of how the territory's children, youth and families are doing.

"You know and the commissioner of Education knows that our kids need individual attention in school. It's nice to talk about, but that virtual reality doesn't really work for some of our students who really need the help. So I'm trying to get students back in front of teachers. How we do that is going to be the safest way possible given our resources and circumstances," Mr. Bryan said.

Daycare Centers

The governor said while daycare centers were never shutdown, his administration would soon release guidance for those facilities. "I raised two kids, I know how it is. You don't have anywhere to send them during the day [and] you have to go to work, so we feel the community's pain. We're trying to figure out the best way to work that so we could give you a little bit of relief and make sure your kids are safe, Mr. Bryan said.

He added, "I would not want to be responsible for any pandemic breakout in a school or daycare."