

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. Of Education Says It Suspended Interscholastic Sports For Students' Safety; Games To Resume Next Week

Sports / **Published On October 13, 2016 10:16 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **October 13, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- The Department of Education confirmed to The Consortium late Wednesday that it had temporarily suspended interscholastic sports in the territory, an annual set of sporting events that sees participation of multiple schools territory-wide.

The Consortium had learned of student protests that had broken out in light of the suspension, as participants were concerned that the events -- credited for helping keep young people off the streets, among other benefits -- had been altogether canceled. In fact, volleyball and cross country matches were not played.

The problem, according to a person with direct knowledge of the matter, whom The Consortium granted anonymity, was the apparent lack of insurance coverage for the students. In the past, this person said, students would be covered by either the government's insurance, Cigna, or the schools' accident policy. Additional coverage was usually sought for football games.

In its statement, D.O.E. said the decision to postpone the games was made with the students' safety in mind.

"The Department of Education made the difficult but necessary decision on Friday, Oct. 7 to temporarily suspend interscholastic sports played at the territory's public schools during the fall months until a more suitable medical insurance for student-athletes could be identified," reads the statement, issued by Cynthia Graham, D.O.E.'s director of public relations and communications. "The decision to suspend the sports was solely made with the best interest and safety of our students in mind. Affected sports included volleyball and cross country."

"We are happy to report that a new insurance company has been identified and as of mid-next week, the sports will resume. Football was not affected under the current suspension because the season had not begun; the football season will begin on Saturday, Oct. 22," the statement adds.

The statement did not address why the problem could not have been rectified before the games began, especially since D.O.E. recently hired an territorial athletic director, Peter Seipel.

Games that were affected, namely volleyball and cross country, will be rescheduled, D.O.E. says. It added that Commissioner Sharon McCollum supports the inclusion of sports in the overall development of students, and that D.O.E. was pleased that the matter was resolved.

Feature Image: Pike High School senior Lynna Irby competes in the first heat of the 100 Meter Dash. Pike High School hosted the Metropolitan Interscholastic Conference (MIC) boys and girls track meet Friday, May 1, 2015.