

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix School Lunch Program Supplies Being Replenished, D.O.E. Says

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ST. CROIX -- Virgin Islands Department of Education Commissioner Sharon McCollum announced on Thursday that food supplies for the School Lunch Program in the St. Croix School District were being fully replenished through local vendors. As of January 25, Merchants Market on St. Croix resumed supplying D.O.E. with food items, according to the release.

Plaza Extra East and West, Stop and Shop and other local merchants are also providing fresh fruit and other goods to the School Lunch Program.

D.O.E.'s announcement follows a letter written by Senator Alicia Hansen and addressed to Ms. McCollum, [decrying the state of the school lunch program](#) here, after the senator was informed that a government food supplies warehouse was almost completely depleted.

Mrs. Hansen had other concerns as well: "Another concern is the sterilization or lack thereof, at many of our public school kitchens which are not conducive to the protection of our children from exposure to disease," she wrote. "As you are aware, to kill bacteria, dishes should not be washed by hand at room temperature, but instead in water set at a hot enough temperature to kill bacteria. In addition to all this, there is also a need for dish liquid to safeguard students and kitchen staff from any epidemic that can be preventable." D.O.E. did not address those concerns in its Thursday release.

Students attending the St. Croix Central High School sent a picture to The Consortium showing what they were being fed earlier this week: [a chicken leg with a pack of chips and once slice of bread](#).

The delay in replenishing food supplies arose from a dispute with Merchants Market and government; an outstanding balance of \$36,000 owed to Merchants Market from the department was paid in full, but the food distributor maintained its postponement of orders to government agencies, including the Department of Education, until all government accounts were made current. The business reversed its decision on January 25 and resumed supplying the School Lunch Program with goods, according to D.O.E. Senator Kurt Vialet had revealed the same information to this publication.

Students participating in the School Lunch Program were to see a variety of menu items included in meals on Thursday, D.O.E. said. Some menu items were depleted during the temporary postponement of orders.

D.O.E. says it is committed to providing students with healthy and balanced meals as part of its mandate to educate the whole child. It further expressed regret that the interruption of services had occurred, and thanked the community for its support as the matter was being resolved.