

The Virgin Islands Consortium

School Lunch Photo Circulating Online Not From Territory's Public School Cafeterias, D.O.E. Says

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ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Department of Education said on Tuesday that [a photo](#) circulating social media that was first posted on Monday, depicting a lunch tray containing macaroni, vegetarian beans and applesauce did not originate from the cafeterias of any of the territory's public schools.

According to D.O.E., the authorized school lunch menu for all schools (public, private and parochial) participating in the department's School Food Authority School Lunch Program on Monday, February 6, 2017, included:

- A choice of tuna casserole OR veggie burger

- Vegetarian beans
- Applesauce
- Milk

D.O.E. said its research indicates that the photo shown on social media originated from the cafeteria of a St. Thomas-based parochial school participating in the School Lunch Program. D.O.E. added that the school's kitchen management deviated from the authorized menu without notification and provided the following to its students on February 6, 2017:

- Tuna salad
- Seasoned macaroni
- Vegetarian beans
- Applesauce
- Milk

The department noted that all students participating in the School Lunch Program may elect to accept or reject lunch menu items; as a result, some lunch trays may contain more food items than others, based on the student's individual preference while being served in the cafeteria.

The confusion follows [legitimate concerns about the School Lunch Program on St. Croix](#), after a government-contracted food supplier, Merchant's Market, halted delivery to D.O.E. not because of the department's failure to make good on its payments, but because of payments owed to the supplier by the Government of the Virgin Islands. Following the disruption, D.O.E. entered into agreements with local grocery stores, including Plaza Extra East and West and Stop and Shop. Merchant's Market also resumed its services to D.O.E.

D.O.E. says it strives to provide the territory's students participating in the School Lunch Program with "nutritious" and "flavorful" meals that are within federal guidelines. The School Lunch Program is federally-assisted.

"We remain committed to ensuring that all of our students are learning and thriving in happy, healthy and safe environments," the release concluded.