

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Department Of Education Says Schools Will Be Ready By August 28

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ST. CROIX -- APTIM and AECOM, two major contractors with operations in the territory for the repairing and remediation of schools, and the building of temporary structures on school sites to house students and administration, both told The Consortium on Wednesday that the hard date for the completion of the work in both the St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John districts is August 28.

Colleen Mae Williams, Department of Education's insular superintendent for the St. Croix District, and Anthony D. Thomas, D.O.E.'s chief of staff, both confirmed the August 28 date to be when all work on schools territory-wide will be completed, giving D.OE. enough time to make other preparations for the upcoming school year.

AECOM is working territory-wide solely on the sprung structures to house school administration and the modular units for students. The media was given a tour of the construction site at the Arthur A. Richards Junior High School on Wednesday, where laborers could be seen working to prepare the foundation for the modular units.

Arthur Richards makes up 55 percent of the work on St. Croix, according to Josh Gerard, construction manager for AECOM on St. Croix. He said 49 modular units and 3 sprung structures will be built on the site.

Aside from Arthur Richards, AECOM is performing work on 4 other schools: Lew Muckle Elementary, John H. Woodson Junior High, Eulalie Rivera Elementary and Pearl B. Larsen Elementary. But Mr. Jerad said the work on those sites is much less in comparison to Arthur Richards. The reason for this, he explained, is that while the entirety of Arthur Richards will be utilizing sprung structures and modular units, the other schools, which were not completely destroyed by the 2017 storms, will utilize some modular units and sprung structures, along with facilities within the schools that are being repaired and are undergoing mold remediation.

APTIM is solely working in the St. Croix district, and only on the repairs and remediation effort. The Consortium toured the Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School, which sustained damage -- including flooding -- where APTIM employees, wearing masks, could be seen removing wet tiles, cleaning classrooms and performing other work in what appeared to be the early stages of the repairs and remediation effort at the school. Just like AECOM, APTIM is working on five schools on St. Croix.

The sites looked far from complete, and The Consortium on multiple occasions asked whether officials were certain that work would be finished before the upcoming school year. Officials from D.O.E., APTIM and AECOM all assured that the work would be done. "They do have their work cut out for them but that's why they were selected," said Mr. Thomas, referring to the contractors. "We had a very robust procurement effort and the companies that were able to do this work and get it done in the right timeline were given the opportunity to do it for us. So we are depending on them, we're partnering with them, and we're expecting them to complete the process as they've been contracted to do."

School tours for Julius E. Sprauve School (10:00 a.m.) and Lockhart Elementary (2:00 p.m.) are scheduled for today in St. Thomas, according to D.O.E.

Feature Image: Work being performed at the Arthur Richards Junior High School on St. Croix. (Credit: DOE)