

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Eulalie Rivera Elementary Opening Pushed To Oct. 1

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Eulalie Rivera Elementary School.

ST. CROIX -- A number of educators along with American Federation of Teachers St. Croix President Rosa Soto-Thomas, had complained that the Eulalie Rivera Elementary School would not be ready to house students Monday. The opening was then pushed to Wednesday by the Department of Education.

Now, in a release issued Tuesday, D.O.E. said it has decided to push the opening to Monday, Oct. 1.

"After reassessing the progress at the school, district leadership deemed it necessary to delay the school's previously announced September 26 opening to October 1 in order to ensure the campus was fully ready to receive students," the department said in a release.

The bungled school reopening territory-wide has been a huge headache for Governor Kenneth Mapp, who cannot afford to lose goodwill six weeks before a general election that will determine his fate. Mr. Mapp called a press conference on Monday in St. Thomas, where he sought to explain that Hurricanes Irma and Maria, Category 5 storms, had walloped the territory, and that while things weren't perfect, he decided to open schools nonetheless so that students could learn.

Pressed on whether his administration should have waited longer to deliver schools that were better prepared to house students, the governor was steadfast with his response.

"Monday morning quarterbacking is a lot of fun," Mr. Mapp said, relegating the issue as spilled milk that is not useful to the present situation. "We watch the game on Sunday, and when the quarterback don't get that ball we can sit back and say, 'you know, you should have done this, you should have done that, and you should have done the other.' It doesn't matter; there is always someone who will tell you that you should have done this a different way. We have to do what we have to do with the information that we have on the table."

Another growing issue is job actions from teachers on St. Croix, who are protesting not only wage issues, but also working conditions at schools.

On Friday, the Office of Collective Bargaining will meet with AFT representatives, where an agreement on salary increases could be reached.