

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Modular Campus For Arthur A. Richards To Open February 11, D.O.E. Says

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ST. CROIX -- The Arthur A. Richards. Jr. High School modular campus will officially open on Monday, February 11 to students and staff, the Department of Education announced Friday. The announcement follows weeks of discussions with contractors and a final walkthrough today, the department said.

Arthur Richards's administrators and staff will be given beneficial occupancy on February 4, explained Acting D.O.E. Commissioner Dionne Wells-Hedrington explained, in order to move supplies on to the campus, and set up their offices and classrooms, according to the D.O.E. release.

News of the opening was met with enthusiasm from the school, which has occupied the upper level of the John H. Woodson Jr. High School campus since last September, D.O.E. said. Arthur Richards also had an abbreviated school day, like other displaced schools in the district, on the campus of St. Croix Educational Complex High School during the 2017-18 school year due to the destruction of the Richards school building from Hurricane Maria in 2017.

While classrooms and most other areas of the modular campus will be ready on February 11, Mrs. Wells-Hedrington said the kitchen, which is housed in one of three expansive, state-of-the-art sprung structures, is still under construction. She said food would be transported to the school until the kitchen is completed.

In addition to the kitchen, internet connectivity throughout the campus will be ongoing for a period of time.

Arthur Richards's modular campus, constructed by American multinational engineering firm AECOM, boasts 48 buildings comprised of 34 classrooms, including four specially designed for Special Education; three computer labs, three bathroom facilities; an administration building; a library; two teacher-planning facilities; and a cafeteria and gymnasium housed in separate Sprung structures. Classrooms and buildings are fully equipped with desks, chairs, shelving, promethean boards and other necessary furnishings. The campus can accommodate a student population of 810, according to officials.

"It's been a long time coming and we are very excited to finally get our students and staff back into their school," Mrs. Wells-Hedrington said.

Mrs. Wells-Hedrington received a guided tour of the Richards campus from AECOM officials and was joined by St. Croix school district officials, Dr. Maria Encarnacion, Ericilda Ottley-Herman and Dr. Carla Bastian; Senators Novelle Francis and Steven Payne; Teacher Union President Rosa Soto-Thomas; and Department of Education Territorial Director of Maintenance Joseph Sibilly and Engineer Alan Fleming.

Arthur Richards Junior High School was the last of the Territory's public schools displaced by Hurricanes Irma and Maria that hit the region in September 2017.