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Gomez School Reverts to Virtual Learning After Covid Exposure; Ulla F. Muller Kitchen Closed Due to Covid Exposure; Joseph Gomez, Bowsky Elementary Kitchens Closed Due to Refrigeration Issues

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The V.I. Department of Education late Wednesday announced several incidents affecting public schools in St. Thomas, leading one facility to revert to virtually learning temporarily while impacting meal distribution at several sites.

Joseph Gomez Elementary K-3rd Grade Students, Teachers To Undergo Covid-19 Testing Sept. 16

Kindergarten through third grade students and teachers at Joseph Gomez Elementary School attending in-person classes will undergo Covid-19 testing by the Virgin Islands Department of Health on Thurs., Sept. 16. The pop-up testing is the result of Covid-19 exposure on the campus on Sept. 14, D.O.E. said.

Faculty and staff have been informed to report to the school's front entrance for testing from 10-10:45 a.m. on Sept. 16; students should report immediately following. Covid-19 testing is free.

All classes are canceled for K-3rd grade students and teachers on Sept. 16; students in grades 4-6 will continue to learn virtually. Gomez Elementary School will conduct all classes virtually on Fri., Sept. 17.

The affected areas of the campus will be thoroughly sanitized by a contracted vendor using CDC-approved products before the campus reopens.

The department reminded employees that if they are sick, they must remain at home and seek guidance from the Virgin Islands Department of Health or a private healthcare provider. If anyone within a household has tested positive for Covid-19 or has Covid-19-related symptoms, children in that household should not attend in-person classes. All members of the household must remain in quarantine until negative Covid-19 test results are received or all members have been cleared by the Department of Health.

To knowingly expose others to Covid-19 is punishable by fines and imprisonment, D.O.E. said.

For more information about symptoms and what to do if exposed to COVID-19, visit www.cdc.gov.

Ulla F. Muller Elementary Kitchen Closed Sept. 16, 17 Due to Covid-19 Exposure

The Ulla F. Muller Elementary School kitchen will be closed Sept., 16 and 17 due to Covid-19 exposure. In-person classes are not affected and will continue to operate safely, Education said.

Students attending in-person classes will receive breakfast and lunch provided from nearby schools.

As a result of the closure of the kitchen, various meal distribution sites will temporarily close, including Bordeaux, Michael Kirwin Terrace, Contant Knolls, Savan Basketball Court, and Uller Muller School (parking lot), D.O.E. said. Parents of students living in these neighborhoods who attend school virtually are asked to pick up meals at other distribution sites. Visit www.vide.vi for a complete list of sites.

The kitchen will be thoroughly sanitized by a contracted vendor using CDC-approved products before reopening, according to the release.

Joseph Gomez, Bowsky Elementary Kitchens Temporarily Closed Due to Electrical Failure of Refrigeration Equipment

D.O.E. said kitchens at the Joseph Gomez Elementary School and the Yvonne Milliner-Bowsky Elementary School are temporarily closed due to the failure of refrigeration equipment at the two locations.

The closure of the Gomez Elementary kitchen is unrelated to the Covid-19 exposure reported at the school on Sept. 14.

Inspectors closed the Gomez and Bowsky kitchens on Sept. 13 when freezers and refrigeration units became inoperable that day. Perishable food items were discarded—the standard procedure when refrigeration is compromised, according to the release. Inspectors also observed a slow leak in an industrial steam kettle in the Gomez kitchen, and water discoloration briefly appeared when some faucets were first opened—an issue affecting potable water customers in the Territory due to older WAPA piping infrastructure. The discoloration cleared as water continued to run.

Department of Education maintenance crews are assessing the cause of the equipment failure, which could stem from recent, frequent power outages. Repairs are being planned, D.O.E. said.

Students attending in-person classes at the two schools are not affected by the kitchen closures, as breakfast and lunch are being brought to the campuses from nearby schools.

The kitchens will reopen when all repairs have been made.