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Dept. of Education Introduces New School Schedule it Says is Aimed at Meeting Teacher Shortage, Addressing Students' Needs

Community Center / **Published On August 02, 2022 12:38 PM /**

Staff Consortium **August 02, 2022**

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Dept. of Education school buses. By. THE V.I. DEPT. OF EDUCATION

The V.I. Dept. of Education announced Tuesday that for the first time in its history, the territory's four public high schools and the St. Croix Career & Technical Education Center have established a standardized start time of 7:40 a.m. and an identical daily schedule, as part of the department's transformational efforts to better address students' academic and social-emotional needs, supplement teacher shortages, and expand program offerings to students.

The changes will take effect at high schools territory-wide on Aug. 8, D.O.E. said.

According to the release, last spring, the school principals, along with state and district Curriculum & Instruction leaders, began re-evaluating teaching and learning practices at the high-school level. This involved five months of intensive planning and cross-district visits to assess needs and find solutions to common problems being experienced at the schools, the department said.

According to district leaders, Dr. Stefan Jurgen, St. Thomas-St. John Insular superintendent, and Ericilda X. Ottley-Herman, St. Croix acting insular superintendent, a primary benefit of the new schedule establishes a 45-minute flex block that will create time for programs and experiences that cater to students' academic and social-emotional needs, such as:

- Intervention/enhancement by subject ?
- Live tutorials?
- Program implementation information (AVID, JAG, SAT Prep, Achieve3000, Exact Path, iReady, Advisory Council, etc.)?
- Hands-on application (Science Lab, CTE Lab, AP Lab, Research Lab, Writing Lab, etc.)?
- Classroom extension activities/performance tasks

“We have taken a deep dive into our data, and it became clear that we needed to do something differently in order to have different and better outcomes for our students,” stated Acting Commissioner Victor Somme III. “The change in scheduling allows us to build into the school day many more supports to ensure students' overall success.”

D.O.E. said another significant benefit of aligning the high school schedules is to provide students with access to classes offered at schools other than their own. District leaders explained that the opportunity will now exist for students at Charlotte Amalie High School and Ivanna Eudora Kean High School to enroll in classes at St. Croix Career & Technical Education Center, Central High School, and St. Croix Educational Complex High School, and vice versa.

In August, the initial rollout will see high school students in the St. Thomas-St. John District enrolling in the Aviation Academy at the St. Croix Career & Technical Education Center, the department said.

“We find this to be a creative way to address our critical teacher shortages by providing cross-district and inter-district access to classes, which is now possible through the Department's technology infrastructure that has been built out over the last two years,” explained Mr. Somme. “We can have students from one district in the same virtual classroom with their peers in the other district if there isn't a teacher available to teach a particular class in the student's home school.”

According to the release, a third part of the high school transformation, which will rollout in Jan. 2023, will establish six territorial career pathways that are aligned to the Virgin Islands Board of Education's new graduation requirements for students in grades 9-12:

- College Prep ?
- Military Sciences?
- Career & Technical Education?
- Fine Arts?
- STEM/STEAM?
- Early Admissions/Dual Enrollment

According to the department, this means that if students were to transfer between any of the territory's public high schools, they would have the opportunity to enroll in either of the pathways.

The high school transformation plan has been presented to all instructional staff at the affected schools, the Virgin Islands Board of Education, teacher unions, Senate Committee on Education & Workforce Development, and the Office of the Governor, D.O.E. said. Similar overhauls to the schedules of elementary, junior high, and K-8 schools are in the planning phase.

[This link shows](#) the daily schedule for Charlotte Amalie High School, Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, St. Croix Central High School, St. Croix Educational Complex High School, and St. Croix Career & Technical Education Center. St. Croix start and end times are [here](#). The same schedule for St. Thomas-St. John is [here](#).

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