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VIPD Officers Assist Dept. of Education With School Security After Monitors on St. Croix Stage Protest

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V.I. Police Department officers substitute for school monitors who did not show up to work on Thursday, Sept. 15, 2022.

School monitors on St. Croix at a number of public learning facilities on Thursday participated in a labor action, leaving several schools without security which prompted the V.I. Police Department to substitute in their absence.

According to several parents, the St. Croix Educational Complex and the John H. Woodson Junior High School were being assisted by V.I.P.D. officers Thursday after monitors did not show up to work.

The monitors are said to be protesting against the proliferation in violence at public schools, but also for pay increases.

The V.I. Dept. of Education told the Consortium that department officials held discussions with monitors on Wednesday. "Today, we experienced monitor shortages at some schools in the St. Croix District. With the numbers of recent fights, our monitors have rightly expressed concerns about their safety," D.O.E. said Thursday. "Department leaders met with school monitors yesterday, and we share in their concerns. We maintain a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to violence on school campuses."

The department said all incidents were being investigated and those involved will be held accountable.



V.I. Police Department Officers at the John H. Woodson Junior High School on Thurs. Sept. 15, 2022

"We are grateful for the support provided by the VIPD and continue to meet with other partners to address these issues," the department said. "There are many more students who come to school to learn, than there are those who come to disrupt learning. We ask parents, and the larger community, to have serious conversations with the young people in your life around good decision-making.

"We also ask parents to be mindful of exhibiting respectful behaviors when visiting our school campuses. We all want the best for our students and we must work together to achieve this."

Violent school fights have erupted and continue across the territory. On Thursday, a parent posted on Facebook that her 10-year-old son had gotten into a fight that left him with a black and blue bruise on his face. The parent complained that she was not notified of the incident, nor was anyone on the child's emergency contact list. She also said the response from the school was indifferent, describing the matter as heartbreaking. The fight occurred at the Claude O. Markoe Elementary School, according to the parent.

In a second post, the parent said the student that her son got into the fight with was suspended for two weeks last month for stabbing a female student with a pencil during the school's lunch break.

On Tuesday, several police units were dispatched to the St. Croix Central High School to quell several violent brawls that saw students — both male and female — punching, swinging and falling, according to videos of the fights viewed by the Consortium.

The V.I. Department of Education has condemned the violence, with Commissioner Nominee Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington suggesting recently that a lot of what has been happening at school over the years have been a result of situations that stem from outside of school and are brought on to the campus. “What we need our parents to do is to speak to your children; what we need the community to do is to be alert and vigilant when you see things transpiring with our students outside of our premises, to inform us so that we could always be prepared to deal with situations when they arise,” she said during a recent meeting late August.

Ms. Wells-Hedrington said efforts must also be made to address the root causes of these incidents. “We’ve got to cure the root in order to change the behaviors and the mindset of our children. I believe every child could be good; I believe that every child has the potential to be great but along the way our community and the influences of life has changed our students’ trajectory especially those that are fighting and displaying all of this aggression – there’s a reason for that.”