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# USVI Public Schools Kick Off the 2023-2024 Academic Year Amidst Excitement and High Hopes

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**A collage of pictures from the first day of school (Aug. 7, 2023) for the new academic year. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM**

The chime of school bells resonated across the territory as USVI public schools in both districts swung their doors open for the 2023-2024 academic school year. Monday morning saw schoolyards filled with animated chatter, laughter, and the occasional nervous glance, as students met with old friends and mingled with newcomers.

Faculty and staff shared the palpable excitement. Teachers, with a spring in their step, eagerly awaited the arrival of their new pupils, keen to get the academic year rolling.

Rodney Moorehead, the principal of St. Croix Educational Complex High School, expressed his anticipation for the year ahead. "We are truly excited to be here for another school year to provide learning to students, and we are ready to go. We urge the community and parents to lend their unwavering support so that we can ensure a successful year for every student."

Similarly, Barbara McGregor, the principal at Juanita Guardine K-8 School, mirrored Moorehead's enthusiasm. "I am looking forward to seeing all the students and having an amazing school year here at the home of the hurricanes," she remarked.

While the adults showcased their optimism and readiness, it was the students who brimmed with sheer joy at being back in school. Dyamond Frazer, a 6th grader at the Pearl B prek-8 School, bubbled with enthusiasm. "It is great to be back to school. I love learning and spending time with my friends. I couldn't wait to come back. I'm particularly excited about the field trips this year."

The new academic year comes with challenges for the Department of Education, which continues to struggle with the incessant separation of educators, who either leave the profession altogether or move to the mainland for better paying opportunities. Even so, Education Commissioner Dr. Dione Wells-Hedrington, has shared optimism during a recent Senate hearing about the future of education in the territory.