



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## **EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OPENS 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR ON HIGH NOTE**

*Governor Albert Bryan, Jr joins Commissioner Berry-Benjamin on tour of schools*

ST. THOMAS, USVI – Department of Education Commissioner Racquel Berry-Benjamin and Governor Albert Bryan, Jr welcomed the territory's public-school students and staff to the 2019-2020 school year on September 3 with a series of visits to classrooms, cafeterias and gymnasiums to assess first-day operations.

Berry-Benjamin led a delegation of Education and Government House officials on morning tours of Charlotte Amalie High School, Lockhart Primary School and Uller F. Muller Elementary School on St. Thomas; and afternoon tours of Arthur A. Richards K-8 School, Juanita Gardine K-8 School and Pearl B. Larsen K-8 School on St. Croix.

"This has been an exciting day for the Department of Education," said Berry-Benjamin. "Our students are back learning, our parents are happy they're back in school and we are happy to have them. Our teachers are ready, they've welcomed our students back and they're excited to begin another year of teaching and learning."

Of the experience, Governor Bryan said, "I wouldn't have missed it for the world. The most, I think, heartening thing of the day was the spirit of these schools that lives in the teachers and the students-- they are just excited to be here."

However, the governor noted there is room for improvement at the territory's public schools, which were severely impacted by the 2017 storms.

“I look forward to seeing the libraries fill up with more books,” he said. “But when you look at those teacher classrooms and the work that they put in to making sure they are prepared for their students today, you know that there is so much commitment and dedication that lies in our Department of Education.”

St. Croix District Insular Superintendent Carlos McGregor expressed satisfaction with operations at his district’s schools.

“Today was just awesome,” McGregor said. “From west to east, all the schools we visited we felt the excitement of students being back in the classroom. We saw the work of the teachers, the maintenance staff, and the custodial staff to get the schools ready.”

St. Thomas-St. John Insular Superintendent Stefan Jurgen echoed McGregor’s sentiments.

“Today was an awesome day,” he began, “we had many challenges [before school opened], but we were able to push through those challenges and begin. Just walking the campuses and seeing the bright, shining faces of our children was all worth it. We look forward to having a most-productive school year.”

Berry-Benjamin said she was “most appreciative and grateful for the level of excitement” seen at the campuses.

“We thank all of our teachers for choosing public education in the Virgin Islands and parents, we thank you for choosing us to educate your children,” she said.

Other schools visited, but were not a part of the official tour with Governor Bryan included Central High School, St. Croix Educational Complex High School, Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, and Joseph Sibilly Elementary School,

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