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VIDE Marks Historic Milestone with Opening of State-of-the-Art Arthur A. Richards PreK–8 School

On Friday, August 7, 2026, the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) proudly celebrated the official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Arthur A. Richards PreK–8 School, marking a historic milestone for public education in the U.S. Virgin Islands. As the first newly constructed public school in the Territory in 27 years, Arthur A. Richards PreK–8 School represents a new era of transformation, resiliency, and innovation within the Virgin Islands public school system. Currently the largest public school in the Territory, the new campus was constructed on the site of the former Evelyn M. Williams Elementary School and replaces educational facilities damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

“Today is a defining moment for public education in the Virgin Islands,” Governor Bryan said. “For the first time in more than 30 years, we are opening the doors to a newly built public school in our Territory. That makes the Arthur A. Richards PreK–8 School more than a new building. It is a statement about what we believe our children deserve, what we expect for our educators, and the future we are determined to build for the Virgin Islands.

“The Bryan-Roach Administration has worked with purpose and persistence to move the rebuilding of our public schools, health facilities and other critical infrastructure from plans to real progress that Virgin Islanders can see. Today, we are seeing the result of that commitment.

“Arthur Richards’ name belongs on a school of this caliber. This campus reflects the excellence, opportunity and pride we want every Virgin Islands student to experience. We did not set out simply to build the best school on St. Croix or even the best school in the Virgin Islands. We set out to build a school that can stand among the very best anywhere in the Caribbean, and today we can be proud that we have done exactly that.”

The state-of-the-art 139,000-square-foot campus can accommodate approximately 750 students. On-site water storage and solar power are among the features designed to support the school’s ability to recover and reopen following a major storm. Made possible in part through funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Arthur A. Richards PreK–8 School establishes a new benchmark for disaster-resilient, high-performance educational facilities.

“I am deeply humbled and grateful to see this vision become a reality after years of thoughtful planning, preparation, and perseverance. Our students, faculty, and staff deserve safe, welcoming, and inspiring learning environments that foster excellence in teaching and learning. Most importantly, our students deserve spaces where they can learn, grow, thrive, and blossom into their fullest potential. The seeds for this moment were planted years ago, nurtured through hard work, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to our

students. Today, we are blessed to witness the fruits of that labor and celebrate what is possible when we remain focused on building a brighter future for public education in the Virgin Islands," said VIDE Commissioner Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington.

The campus features the Evelyn Williams Commons Building, which houses the school's cafeteria and library/media center, honoring the legacy of the former school while creating spaces that support learning and community engagement. "The Virgin Islands Department of Education is proud to open the new Arthur A. Richards PreK–8 School, a significant milestone in our commitment to providing students with modern, resilient, and inspiring learning environments. The Evelyn Williams Commons Building is the culmination of extensive negotiations with FEMA and a comprehensive community master planning process. The school represents not only a new beginning for this community, but also the first of many modern educational facilities to come across the Territory," said Chaneel Callwood-Daniels, VIDE Architect-of-Record.

Beyond its impact on education, the Arthur A. Richards PreK–8 School project served as a catalyst for local economic growth and workforce development. Throughout construction, MCN Build awarded more than $89 million in contracts to local subcontractors, supporting hundreds of jobs for Virgin Islanders and generating meaningful economic activity across the Territory. For MCN Build, the project's economic footprint reflects a broader commitment to the communities it serves. "Every child deserves an equal opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. The Arthur A. Richards school stands as a lasting investment in educational equity and the future of St. Croix," says Rudy Seikaly, the company's CEO.

"This is the largest vertical disaster recovery project completed to date. At a cost of over $264 million, it stands as a testament to resilience and perseverance," said Adrienne L. Williams, Octalien, Director of the Office of Disaster Recovery. "This is not just a school but a foundation for future generations, from the demolition of the original school in Frederiksted to the demolition of the old Evelyn Williams School, and now the new Arthur A. Richards Pre-K to 8 school! This was a hard-fought battle grounded in passion and the knowledge to turn what our students deserve into something greater than we could have ever imagined. Thank you to VIDE, FEMA, MCN Build, DPW, DPNR, the subcontractors, and all of our local and federal partners for completing this project on time and on budget for the children of St. Croix."

"The grand opening of Arthur A. Richards PreK–8 School marks a significant milestone in the reimagining of what education can look like in the U.S. Virgin Islands. We celebrate the first school to open as part of a plan and vision we created with VIDE nearly a decade ago, and it serves as a catalyst for the continued transformation we will see across the Virgin Islands over the next 10 years," said Pamela Loeffelman, DLR Group Senior Principal and K–12 Education Design Leader.

Today's ceremony reflects VIDE's commitment to rebuilding and transforming the Territory's educational infrastructure. As the first new school to emerge from the Territory's comprehensive school modernization efforts, Arthur A. Richards PreK–8 School stands as a symbol of progress and possibility, and a foundation for the next generation of public education in the Virgin Islands.

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