



Ministry of Education

PRESS STATEMENT

Department of Education & Bermuda College Updates

The Hon Diallo V. Rabain, J.P., M.P.
Minister of Education

Friday, May 1st, 2020

5:30 pm

Good Day,

In our efforts to keep the general public informed and specifically our entire education family, this evening I am providing updates on both Department of Education and Bermuda College matters, for our students, educators, and parents and guardians.

Prior to the updates, let me say that today is Principal Appreciation Day! At this time I want to acknowledge and thank all of our educational leaders in both the private and public school systems for their commitment to the education of our children. Their leadership is applauded through this unprecedented time, and we say thank you!

I will begin with sharing brief updates for the Department of Education covering:

- Remote Learning
- Provision of Laptops
- Preparation for School Reopening
- Graduation Requirements
- Student Transcripts

Remote Learning

On Wednesday this week the Hon Premier announced in his Press Statement that after the lifting of the Shelter in Place, all schools will remain closed. This means that next week our schools will continue with remote learning until the decision is made for schools to reopen. I applaud the trojan efforts of our principals, our teachers and staff as they deliver remote learning experiences to our students.

I have seen several videos and WhatsApp meesages that are being circulated and I must say that there are many amazing learning experiences happening for our students at all levels of the Education System. Using Zoom as the major technology tool, schools are holding weekly student assemblies and in some instances are students are leading out, morning meetings are held as well as circle times with students. Teachers are delivering lessons in real time. They are also sharing pre-recorded lessons and providing a variety of stimulating activities for all subject areas, including science experiments.

Students are receiving small group instruction; with Learning Support teachers and Reading teachers joining in sessions with their students during their class or individually scheduled time. Students are uploading videos, pictures and other evidence to confirm what they are learning and what they can do.

Students are also receiving services from educational therapists, para educators and school counsellors. I am pleased that some of our parents are engaged in conferences, MTSS Sessions, and some parents have participated in Zoom chat and chews. There are some principals who are teaching classes; and one principal has even launched a Youtube video for read aloud time with students.

As we close out the month of April, which was autism month, I commend the teachers in our pre, primary, middle and senior schools who deliver the Autism Programme for our students with autism. They too are using Zoom to provide interactive lessons and appropriate sensory activities for our students.

As parents adjust to the steady demands of remote learning, providing support is critical. I extend my gratitude to Mirrors who is assisting with coordinating donations for

laptops for students; and with supporting parents through their Parent Connect Programme. Parents who are seeking support with navigating Zoom and the remote learning experience can use the Bermuda Public School System (BPSS) Family's electronic feedback form to access the support. The link to the form will be sent to parents again next week.

Laptops for Teachers and Students

Last week the Department of Education's IT team prepared laptops donated by PWC for distribution to some of our teachers. We are very much grateful to PWC for the donation of 90 laptops. These were delivered this week to 59 teachers with the assistance of staff from the Ministry of Public Works. The delivery of the remaining laptops will continue next week.

I also extend my gratitude to the Bank of Bermuda Foundation for providing laptops to some of our students and teachers valued at roughly \$34,000. There were 21 students at The Berkeley Institute, and 10 students and 7 teachers at the Dellwood Middle School who have received Laptops.

Let me acknowledge CEO Mr. Frank Amaral of One Communications Ltd. Mr. Amaral contacted CedarBridge Academy to offer free WiFi hotspots for students without internet. These devices will enable students to participate in the school's remote learning programme for the remainder of the online learning experience. One Communications Ltd. has provided over 60 devices for public schools, with CedarBridge Academy receiving 22 devices for senior school students. I thank Mr. Frank Amaral and One Communications Ltd. for their generous donation and support of students in the Bermuda Public School System.

Also, Bermuda-based Legal & General Reinsurance will be launching a 'Lighthouse Connect' fund to raise monies to purchase free laptops to public school students. Legal & General have already provided an initial contribution to the funds. The laptops will be procured in stages as funds are raised; and the distribution of laptops will then be

managed by the Mirrors Programme in conjunction with the Department of Education. We thank the CEO of Legal & General Reinsurance, Mr. Thomas Olunloyo.

The generous donations from PWC, the Bank of Bermuda Foundation, One Communications Ltd. and, Legal & General Reinsurance will certainly strengthen the remote learning programme and ultimately benefit all of our students and teachers.

Preparing for School Reopening

Although there is no fixed date when our schools will reopen, there is still the need to be positioned and ready for effective delivery of classroom teaching and learning. Therefore, technical officers in the Department of Education led by the Commissioner of Education have had several planning meetings preparing for the reopening of schools. Department staff are working closely with Ministry of Health representatives who have provided extensive guidance and technical support on health and safety protocols that must be implemented when schools reopen. A draft plan of considerations for reopening schools was developed with components detailing the various protocols required. On Wednesday this week, we held a meeting with all three Union stakeholders (the BIU, BPSU and BUT). We were very pleased that the President of each Union participated. There was much exchange including comments, feedback on the draft plan and recommendations for improvement. The components of the draft plan was also shared with our school leaders at a meeting held yesterday. The information received will help in finalizing the school reopening plan.

Graduation Requirements

We have received questions from our students and parents about graduation requirements and obtaining school transcripts for university, scholarships and awards applications.

At this time, I want to personally inform our S4 senior school students, our parents, and the educational community that I have agreed to the recommendations made to revise some of the requirements for our High School Diplomas, in light of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. These changes will affect both the Bermuda School Diploma (BSD) and the

Bermuda Alternative School Diploma (BASD); and, are applicable only for the June 2020 cohort.

Our senior school students transitioned to remote learning on March 19th as a result of the closure of schools. Additionally, the shelter in place impacted many students' ability to complete all the requirements for graduation which included the required hours for community service, co-curricular hours, and work placement activities.

Therefore, I have agreed that the minimum requirement for community service, co-curricular activities, and work experience will be waived where normally applicable. All other graduation requirements will remain in place. That is, for both the Bermuda School Diploma (BSD) and the Bermuda Alternative School Diploma (BASD), students must still meet the minimum requirements for course credits, the grade point average (GPA), and school attendance.

The revisions to the diploma requirements apply only to those criteria impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. I am satisfied that the revisions are reasonable and will not compromise the academic standard or currency of each diploma. I thank our senior school Principals and staff for their collaborative efforts to facilitate remote learning for our students. I also wish our S4 students well in their efforts to meet the requirements for their respective graduation diploma.

Transcripts

Also, as our students prepare for after high school experiences, I want to ensure that they are clear about the process for securing transcripts.

Each senior school has a designated member of staff who is responsible for responding to requests for transcripts. As a first step, students are to email requests for transcripts to:

1. Ms. Nicole Crockwell at The Berkeley Institute; and,

2. Ms. Champagne Cann at CedarBridge Academy.

Once the transcript verification process is completed for a student, staff members, at each of the respective schools will complete the transcript request form and submit it to the Department of Education. Once received by schools, transcript requests will be completed within 5 business days.

Former students of the Bermuda Public School System who require transcripts will need to complete the relevant form which can be found on the Ministry of Education's website at www.moed.bm. Requests for transcripts from former students will be filled within 3 business days.

Before, moving on to the Bermuda College, I would like to provide a brief update on the **Ministry of Education scholarships and awards offerings**, to let applicants know that the deadline has been extended to Thursday May 7th. I know that many of you are operating under difficult circumstances, but I encourage those who are pursuing post-secondary education to find the time to complete their applications. Upon reviewing the number of applications received this morning, we noted that the number of applications submitted is lower than last year for all categories, with the exception of two. So, with the extended deadline, this gives time for applicants to still submit applications. Anyone with questions or concerns should email scholarships@moed.bm for assistance.

Thank you to those who completed our scholarship survey and shared how COVID-19 has impacted planned studies and/or your ability to complete scholarship applications. We received 108 survey responses which are currently being analyzed. The results will help us to better support applicants and our upcoming scholarships recipients.

I now turn to the Bermuda College updates as impacted by COVID-19.

On March 23rd, just after the first positive case of the virus was reported in Bermuda, the Bermuda College closed its campus and moved its classes online, while its employees began working remotely from home.

However, during the past 5 weeks, some of the creative and innovative activities that have been occurring include:

- Virtual science labs and field trips,
- Culinary arts students conducting labs in their own kitchens supported virtually by their instructors, and
- Zoom lectures, group discussions and musical performances.

Students in environmental studies even sponsored an online “Trashion Show” using completely recyclable materials. To continue unparalleled support of students, counselling services, academic advising, and tutoring have all continued virtually.

Let me extend my gratitude to the faculty and staff at Bermuda College who have ably risen to the challenges of reverting to an e-learning platform with little notice, and who have innovatively facilitated the success of student learning.

Unfortunately, like many of its overseas counterparts, Bermuda College has decided not to hold a Commencement ceremony this year as a result of COVID-19. They will be celebrating the Class of 2020 at a future date. However, the College will be putting a plan in place so that graduates can collect their certificates, diplomas and Associate degrees on May 28th 2020.

Summer School at the Bermuda College, that was due to start on May 18th, will now start on June 1st and all courses will be on line. The course schedule for the academic and professional development courses will be available on the College website, www.college.bm on May 5th. This is an opportune time to learn new skills, expand your resume, and develop your personal or professional worth. With its international accreditation, students from overseas institutions can also take summer courses to decrease their course load for the Fall term. We encourage students and adults alike to discover new course areas such as FinTech, data analysis, project management and managing remote teams, that are particularly pertinent during these times.

I am particularly pleased to note that the PACE Division will be offering the Certificate for Nursing Assistants programme online, which is both timely and relevant because of the critical and immediate need for healthcare professionals.

As a way of assisting the community during these unprecedented times, Bermuda College is also inviting the community to take advantage of its online training resource, Hoonuit (pronounced Who Knew It). There are a wide variety of tutorials available covering: software and technology, goal setting, time management, and teaching and instructional resources. This resource will be offered to the community at no charge from May 5th until September 1st. The registration form will be available on the Bermuda College website on May 5th.

Finally, Bermuda College is considering various options for the next academic year and will be making a decision about its Fall semester courses in early June. For further details on programmes and courses visit the Bermuda College website at www.college.bm.

As I close, I commend the Bermuda College students on their hard work in adapting to remote learning under these circumstances, and encourage them to continue their studies in the Summer and/or Fall. I want to also thank the Bermuda College employees for all that they have been doing, and are doing to ensure tertiary education continues during this pandemic.

Thank You.