



Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

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Minister of Education

Middle School and School Reform – A Critical Update
Friday July 24th 2020

Mr Speaker,

This morning I rise to give my Honourable colleagues a critical update on the Government's pledge to remake and redesign our education system. The PLP Government's 2017 winning election platform promised to: *“Reform public education by phasing out middle schools and introducing signature schools at the secondary level, which focus on the learning styles and interests of our children, including academic, technical and the trades, business, sports, arts, and special needs education...”*

Within the same Election Platform, the Government pledged to *“..Review and implement the recommendations from the ongoing Department of Education's Strategic Review. . .”*

In 2017, we finalized and published the strategic review, titled *Plan 2022: Bermuda's Strategic Plan for Public School Education*. *Plan 2022*, was developed and designed for and with students, parents, educators, non-profit and business representatives, as well as other members of our community.

Without doubt, to phase out middle schools and introduce signature schools, is the flagship education commitment of this Government to the people of Bermuda.

It reflects the change expected and demanded of this community for all of us, to think about education for today and tomorrow, but to also have vision to execute and deliver a public school system which meets the needs and aspirations of our community for our children and the future of Bermuda.

Mr Speaker,

In March of this year, I informed my Honourable colleagues, that the long-term adaptive *Strategy 5.3.5* in Plan 2022 will be the guide for our plan to phase out of middle schools, introduce signature schools and realign the public education system.

This strategy states: *“To ensure college and career readiness, [we will] review the current structure of schools (primary, middle, senior) and revise for maximum student success, including the consideration of special school designs to meet unique student needs or interests. (Strategy 5.3.5)*

Mr Speaker,

To deliver the Government and communities wishes for public education, the Ministry of Education is currently overseeing the most substantial change to Bermuda’s public education system in 20 years. Such immense change cannot be achieved in haste, nor can it be realized without consistent collaboration with critical and other stakeholders. It is those who make up our education system and broader community who will help facilitate and support this future-minded transformation.

As Plan 2022 was developed with extensive community input, the plan to remake our public school system will undergo similar levels of involvement before any changes are made. To quote our Honourable Premier when asked about Education Reform in this House *“..We will measure not once, not twice but three times before we cut..”*

Mr Speaker,

I am happy to update Honourable Members and the public that, despite COVID-19, the planning and development work to phase out middle schools and introduce signature schools within a 2-tier education system is continuing. Since my last update in March, a **PROTOTYPE** for the future of the Bermuda Public School System has been developed. Some will be familiar with the use of this technical term as it reflects the approach undertaken during the development of *Plan 2022*. This prototype will be built upon and fine-tuned with further collaboration and engagement with the stakeholders who will deliver on our new education system, and the constituents who will be its beneficiaries. Using design-thinking and prototypes allows us to design and test the proposals, improve upon them and test again to produce changes that meet the promise of the Government and the current and future needs of our community.

Mr Speaker,

The first prototype has been shared with critical stakeholders over the last 2 months. Their feedback has been invaluable and been used as a resource as the prototype evolves. The prototype is being used for the next stages of the plan development. During these last 2 months, we have presented the prototype to:

- The Cabinet
- The PLP Caucus
- The Opposition
- The Board of Education
- The Department of Education Staff
- Preschool Administrators and Principals
- Preschool, Primary, Middle and Senior School Teaching Staff
- Executive Members of PTAs for Primary, Middle and Senior Schools, and our Special School, Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy
- The Executive Boards of the BUT, BPSU and BIU
- The Executive Members of Boards for all Aided Schools, and
- The Bermuda Educators Council.

Mr Speaker,

Presentations are also planned for:

- School Custodians and Administrative Assistants
- A Cross-Section of Students
- Parents, and
- Other Members of our Community.

Mr Speaker,

This prototype is a result of 2 years of engagement, collaboration and data collection, as well as the study of best international practices for improving the quality and delivery of education for all. We have a vision that sees changes to the education structure with the removal of middle schools, the introduction of signature schools and and the absolute movement to new ways of teaching to better match the ways in which children can and do learn.

Mr Speaker,

This prototype begins with the end in mind, meaning that the elements of the prototype are consistently guided by the kinds of graduates that the public system will develop, along with parents, peers, mentors and community partners. To achieve this, the continued prototype work will look specifically at:

A two-tier education framework that removes middle schools and introduces signature schools. A two-tier education system designed to increase education options for all students, including tailored education and support for young people with special, additional or alternative education needs.

More and more students (who would have attended middle schools) will at younger ages, have access to City & Guilds and NCCER certifications, Expanded Dual Enrollment with the Senior Schools and Employability Skills. This is being developed to expose our students to a broader variety of potential life interests at an earlier age.

Mr Speaker,

Signature School Students who are on the pathway to preparing for post-secondary education, training, the world of work and community life, will participate in co-operative education, work placements, apprenticeships, internships, Dual Enrollment at Bermuda College, NCCER and City and Guilds Certifications, Signature Certifications, Leadership and Employability Skills, music examinations and other International Certifications. This is not only to prepare students for post-secondary education, training and employment, but to help students grow in the world as thinkers, creatives, entrepreneurs, and citizens who will lead and further develop Bermudian society.

Mr Speaker,

The curricula is being re-examined to develop more internationally-recognized curricular options. Young people deserve more diverse and flexible options for learning anywhere and at anytime.

The prototype also calls for enhanced educator's qualifications as we look to not only transform the structure of the system, but our approach to the profession of teaching and methods of teacher practice. Educators entering the system will be expected to possess and/or obtain:

- Qualifications, experiences and competencies that meet international standards
- Certifications
- BEC License
- Pass a locally created version of the Praxis Examination
- International Certification (recertified every 5 years)
- ICT Certification
- Leadership Development
- 21st Century Evaluation System (Current evaluation tool is McRel)

- Professional courses (separate from PD) required every two years
- SCARS, TCI, MTSS and Restorative Circles Trained
- Fit to Work with Children

Embedded within the teaching profession is a commitment to growth and life-long learning. Therefore, the Department of Education and the Bermuda Educators Council will work with educators to develop pathways for improved professional learning during the transformation process.

Mr Speaker,

Our system also requires modern, fit-for-purpose facilities to support the new education structure, the delivery of modern curricula and high-quality teaching. Therefore, much of the prototype work will look at what facilities are required to support 21st century and real world and authentic learning experiences for students in all of our schools.

Our prototype details the removal of middle schools and the remaking and redesign of our current system. However, this work cannot be done by the Department of Education and our consultant, Innovation Unit alone. The prototype calls for the development and recruitment of School Redesign Teams. The persons that will serve on these teams will be predominantly teachers and leaders within the public school system and will engage parents, students, business, cultural and community organisations, other learning institutions, and relevant Government Departments.

Mr Speaker,

Additionally, Ministry and Department of Education staff will collaborate with and support School Design Teams to test the feasibility and viability of the new models of teaching and learning, along with the assessment practices for the schools that will form the new two-tier structure. They will also develop and implement the workforce and technology strategies that best support and enable the redesigned schools and redesigned system.

Mr Speaker,

Plan 2022 Adaptive Strategy 5-1 calls for us to “...*Develop a governance structure that both holds the Department of Education directly accountable to citizens through a board of education and that provides the Department greater autonomy for fiscal, human, and operational decisions...*” Some will read this as a call for an Education Authority as called for by Bermuda First. This idea is still very much being considered, and discussions with Bermuda First are still ongoing. However, the current governance structure will be

evaluated, and the best structure for our system will be determined and presented in due course.

Mr Speaker,

I have repeatedly referred to a **PROTOTYPE** when referring to the future of the Bermuda Public School System. I have also stated that we recognise the need for collaboration and consultation to ensure we have a system that the Bermuda public have asked for through *Plan 2022*. In the coming months, we will begin more extensive consultation to gather the public's feedback. When we have a prototype, as we do, that talks about the reduction or consolidation of schools, repurposing schools and realigning the system, consultation is required and consultation will happen. However, rest assured, the phasing out of Middle Schools is a promise that the Government views as absolute and will deliver on.

Mr Speaker,

We will make sweeping positive changes in how we educate our students. We will phase out the middle schools and introduce signature schools which will have curricula to support professions required by the Bermudian workforce, including the trades and entrepreneurs needed in Bermuda and beyond, now and the future, including what is needed for those students with special needs.

Mr Speaker,

We will transform our current system from 3-tier to 2-tier based on best practices and genuine input from the Bermuda community. Our goal is to provide our children with the structure, resources, and support to enable them to participate in, profit from and lead the 21st Century economy of Bermuda.

Mr Speaker,

I ask Honourable Members and Bermuda as a whole to join us as we *Transform the Bermuda Public School System*.

Thank You, Mr Speaker.