



Ministerial Statement

To The House of Assembly

By

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Minister of Education

The Education Authority Bill: Purpose, Progress, and Principles

Friday, July 17th, 2026

Mr Speaker,

I rise this morning to provide this Honourable House with an update on the

Education Authority Bill:

- its purpose,
- how it will be established,
- what the passage of the Bill will and will not do,
- and the pathway to its introduction to this Chamber in September.

Mr Speaker, the establishment of an Education Authority is among the most significant governance reforms contemplated for our public education system in a generation.

Mr Speaker, before I turn to the Bill, I want to place it in its proper context. The Education Authority has always been part of this Government's education reform agenda. It is not a new idea, nor a departure from the reform programme underway. It is the governance foundation that the broader reform programme has long required, a piece of structural work that, once delivered, allows every other reform effort to be sustained, strengthened, and protected over the long term.

Mr Speaker, this is not a partisan project. Successive governments have identified the need for stronger governance and clearer accountability in our public

education system. This Bill builds on that shared analysis and on the reform work already underway, and it does what earlier efforts could not. It places the governance framework for public education into statute, where it can endure beyond any single administration.

Mr Speaker, before I turn to the structure of the Bill, I want to be clear about its purpose. This reform exists for one reason: **to build a public education system that serves the children of Bermuda better than it does today**. Every child in our public schools deserves to learn in a system that is well-governed, professionally led, and focused unwaveringly on their outcomes - in literacy, in numeracy, in wellbeing, and in the life chances they carry with them into adulthood. That is what this reform is for. Governance change is the means. Better outcomes for our students is the end.

Mr Speaker, the Education Authority Bill will establish, in statute, the **Bermuda Education Authority**, a statutory body corporate to lead the Bermuda Public School System.

The Authority is designed to be:

- **An Authority** - a public body held at arm's length from day-to-day politics;
- **Governed by a merit-based Board** - nine appointed members with defined, statutory expertise;
- **Commencing in legislated stages** - beginning with a defined first stage of 18 months; and
- **Accountable to Parliament** - through Public Board meetings and Annual Reports laid before Parliament.

Mr Speaker, this is not a rebranding exercise. It is not the movement of names on an organisational chart. It is a carefully designed structural reform, delivered in defined stages, to address long-standing challenges in the governance and accountability of our public education system.

Mr Speaker, some will ask what an Education Authority adds to the reform work already underway. The answer is durability. An Education Authority provides

continuity across political cycles. It provides a governance structure whose remit is education, and only education. It provides long-term stewardship of the system, insulated from the pressures of short political timescales. And it provides a single, accountable point of professional leadership at the top of the public school system. These are structural strengths that will protect the reform work already delivered and give the reform work ahead the foundation it needs to succeed.

Mr Speaker, much has been said, in public commentary, about the concept of independence in relation to this Authority. Today, I want to speak plainly to this House about what independence means in practice. Educational independence is a function of how a system is governed, not merely who funds it. The Authority will be a public statutory body, funded by the Government and answerable to the Minister and to Parliament, not a private entity. That is entirely consistent with independent, professional governance.

Mr Speaker, the Bill adopts what is known as the quasi-autonomous public body model, commonly known as a **QUANGO**. A structure held at arm's length from Government, which is used across the Commonwealth for public functions that require independence from day-to-day political direction while remaining publicly funded and publicly accountable.

The independence of the Authority is protected through several structural features written into the Bill, such as:

- **A merit-based Board of nine voting members with defined statutory expertise** - including educational expertise, expertise in supporting vulnerable students, a Bermuda College representative, and private and public-sector experience, with the Commissioner of Education as a non-voting, ex officio member. Appointments will be advertised and merit-based.
- **Clearly defined statutory powers and duties**, so that the public, Parliament, and the Authority itself understand precisely where its remit begins and ends.

- **The Authority's substantive operational design will be developed by the Board itself**, in consultation with stakeholders - not by political actors on the Board's behalf.
- **A governance framework designed to endure** beyond any single administration. Legislation of this significance must serve Bermuda's children regardless of which party forms the Government of the day.

Mr Speaker, these are not aspirations. These are the design features of the Bill.

Mr Speaker, the Bill provides for the establishment of the Authority in **four defined, legislated stages**. This is a deliberate design choice, one intended to ensure that reform is delivered thoughtfully, consultatively, and with appropriate legal safeguards at every step.

Stage 1 — Establish (the first 18 months following commencement, with a single limited 12-month extension available)

Stage 1 establishes the Authority as a body corporate, appoints the Board, and begins planning and consultation.

During Stage 1, the Board will:

- **Prepare the proposed School Board framework for all schools to use** — designing the model and consulting on it; but establishment follows in a later stage;
- **Design the future organisational structure of the Authority;**
- **Consult widely** — engaging unions, aided schools, parents, and the community; and
- **Recommend the onward pathway for Stages 2, 3, and 4.**

Stage 2 — Structure (follows Stage 1; and will require further legislation)

Stage 2 develops the operational structure, builds the proposed School Board's framework, and undertakes workforce planning. Stage 2 will require further legislation, which will only be brought before this Honourable House after the Board has completed its Stage 1 consultation.

Stage 3 — Transfer

Stage 3 transfers functions from the Department of Education to the Authority, and School Boards become operational.

Stage 4 — Full Control

Stage 4 marks the abolition of the Department of Education and the Authority's assumption of full operational control for the Bermuda Public School System.

Mr Speaker, I want to be clear here, that Stage 2 will require further legislation and consultation before we proceed. That will be a legal requirement, not a political promise.

Mr Speaker, these stages are not procedural for their own sake. Each stage exists to build a system that delivers the desired accountability, better teaching, stronger school leadership, faster decision-making, and improved outcomes for the children in our classrooms.

Mr Speaker, having set out what the Bill will do, and the four stages through which the Authority will be established, I want to turn now to what the passage of the Bill in September will not do, because clarity on both is equally important. This is important - for our teachers, for our principals, for our public officers, for our aided schools, and for the parents and students who rely on the stability of our education system every day.

The passage of the Bill in September will start **Stage 1**, which is to establish the Authority in law and provide for the appointment of its independent, merit-based Board. It will not, of itself, produce the operational transfers that come in later stages. Specifically, Stage 1 does not:

- Transfer employees out of the Public Service;
- Change employees' terms and conditions;
- Change collective bargaining arrangements;
- Abolish the Department of Education;
- Establish School Boards; or

- Change any employee's employment status.
- and Aided schools will remain, as they are today, on their own distinct footing

Mr Speaker, Any change to employment arrangements and Aided School operations occurs only at a later, legislated stage, with consultation and legal protection.

Mr Speaker, stability in Stage 1 is not merely a reassurance to staff and Aided Schools. It is a promise to our students that their education will not be disrupted by the very reforms designed to improve it.

Mr Speaker, consultation in this reform is not a matter of Ministerial promise. It is a matter of **statute**.

The Bill includes three principal safeguards:

- **First**, no progression without consultation — we will not proceed to Stage 2 legislation without consultation with the affected stakeholders.
- **Second**, a statutory duty to consult — the Board must consult on the future School Board model, workforce framework, and organisational design.
- **Third**, a "table-or-explain" obligation — before the first stage expires, the Government must table the next stage's legislation or publicly explain the delay.

Mr Speaker, the Attorney-General's Chambers has advised on the legal pathway, and the staged approach is designed to be legally sound at every step.

Mr Speaker, I want to speak directly about our **aided schools**, whose leaders I met with earlier this week. Nothing changes for aided schools during Stage 1. Aided schools' governance, funding relationship, and distinct character are unaffected during Stage 1.

Mr Speaker, the Aided schools are recognised in the Act as a distinct policy issue, to be addressed in their own right, not folded into general reform. The Authority will be under a statutory duty to consult them, and their long experience of independent school-level governance will provide valuable input as the Board designs the future School Board framework for the wider public school system.

Mr Speaker, since returning to the Education portfolio, my priority has been to engage directly and meaningfully with those most affected by this legislation.

I have personally met and spoken with:

- The **Bermuda Union of Teachers**;
- The **Bermuda Public Services Union**; and
- **All of our aided schools** and
- Various individuals who were part of the wider consultation on the development of the Education Authority recommendations

The purpose of those meetings was to reconvene the Education Authority engagement process, to provide a full and honest update, and to outline the road ahead. I am happy to report that those meetings were received favourably.

Mr Speaker, I want to acknowledge the history behind this work openly. Substantive engagement took place between 2021 and 2024, and those contributions have informed the current draft Bill. Following a change in Ministerial portfolios in early 2025, that Working Group was stood down. Following the most recent change in Ministerial portfolios 2 weeks ago, the Working Group's data and the drafting status of the Education Authority Bill have been reviewed. The work has now reconvened with the same partners.

Mr Speaker, I have also offered His Majesty's Loyal Opposition the same briefing provided to our unions and aided schools. I have also restarted the Opposition Education WhatsApp group that existed before my move to the Cabinet Office. The offer to be collaborative is open. I would welcome the Opposition taking it up, and I remain confident that on a matter of this importance to Bermuda's children, we can find common ground.

Mr Speaker, the pathway ahead is straightforward:

- **September Session** — the Bill is tabled in the House of Assembly;
- **Commencement** — Stage 1 begins and runs 18 months, with one optional 12-month extension;
- **Later stages** — Stage 2 requires further legislation, after consultation; and
- **Full transition** — a multi-year path to full operational control of the school system.

I invite all Honourable Members, on both sides of this House, to engage constructively with the legislation on its merits. This reform is bigger than any political party. It is about the children of Bermuda.

Mr Speaker, I want to be clear with this House and with the public about what this Bill is designed to do — and what it is not. An Education Authority alone does not improve literacy. It does not, on its own, strengthen teaching. It does not, by itself, address student wellbeing. Those improvements come through the daily work of educators, school leaders, families, and communities - through the reform programme already underway, and through the work that will continue for years to come. What an Education Authority does is provide the governance, the accountability, and the continuity needed to sustain that work over the long term. It is the foundation on which sustained improvement is built.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I want to speak plainly about the standard by which this legislation should be judged.

It should be judged on whether it delivers genuine educational governance reform, not merely a change in administrative structures; on whether appointments are genuinely merit-based; on whether accountability is real, measurable, and enshrined in law; on whether consultation is structural and required by the Act; and on whether the framework is durable enough to serve Bermuda's children across administrations. Those are the right standards. And this Bill is intended to meet them.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank our teachers, our principals, our aided school leaders, our public officers, our union partners, and the many parents and community members who continue to contribute to and shape the reform work. Whatever we achieve through this reform will rest on their foundation.

But most of all, **Mr Speaker**, I want to speak to Bermuda's students, the young people whose futures depend on the choices this House makes.

Mr Speaker, Governments will change. Ministers will change. But every child entering Bermuda's public schools deserves a system that continues to improve, regardless of who holds these roles. That is what this legislation is about: creating that stability and safeguarding it for the generations to come.

Mr Speaker, this Bill is not about who runs the system. It is about how the system serves the child. I look forward to returning to this Honourable House in September to formally table the Education Authority Bill and to the substantive, evidence-based debate that will follow.

Thank you, **Mr Speaker**.