

BERMUDA PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
GRADUATION AND EXTERNAL EXAMINATION RESULTS
MINISTER OF EDUCATION
THE HONOURABLE DAME JENNIFER SMITH, JP, DBE, DHUML, JP
MONDAY 03 OCTOBER 2011

Good afternoon,

Thank you for coming.

I welcome the presence of the Chairman of the Board of Education, Mr. Darren Johnston, the Permanent Secretary of Education Mr. Warren Jones, Commissioner of Education, Mrs. Wendy McDonell and the Director of Academic Services, Dr. Llewellyn Simmons.

In spite of all the doom and gloom others seem to see when they view education - I am pleased to share a positive news story about our graduation and external examination results.

Over the past several months, with the support of all of those persons who work hard to make a difference in the lives of students, I have been working to change the nature of the conversation we have about Bermuda's public school system.

Since becoming the Minister of Education on November 1, 2010, I have constantly underlined the fact that we have much to celebrate in the public education system.

You cannot have failed to notice that I am always congratulating students for their many positive achievements.

Lest I be quoted as saying that "***everything is fine in our public school system***"; let me be clear –the results I share today certainly set out a positive story, but we still have much to do and a long way to go. We have no intention of settling for good when we can be better. It is our goal to one day be the subject of a headline stating that – "**Bermuda Leads the World in Education**".

Before I continue, I have to respond to an unrealistic expectation that wants us to deliver examination results to the public before principals and staff have had an opportunity to see them.

The reality is that schools must first of all receive the information. Principals must then share that information with their students, teachers and parents. Cabinet and the Board of Education must also review the results. It is only then, that we are able to publish the information in the public domain.

Let me begin with the 2011 **Graduation Results:**

Ninety-six percent of S4 students graduated. This includes students who completed their graduation requirements in June; as well as those who attended summer school in order to complete the graduation requirements.

Graduation requirements mean that students must achieve a minimum of 104 credits - 62 in required subjects and 42 in elective subjects.

However, the Board of Education has set a target that requires students by 2012 to also have a minimum grade-point-average (GPA) of 2.0 or 70% in order to graduate. As a point of reference, seventy-two percent of our 2011 graduates achieved a GPA of 2.0.

Now the results of the External Examinations:

During the 2010/2011 school year a total of five hundred and seventy seven (577) external exams were taken by 350 public senior school students in the subjects of English, Mathematics, Science, Foreign Language, Technology, Religious Studies, Physical Education, Business Studies and The Arts.

The exams are administered by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE); Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA); and Edexcel.

An overall pass rate of 90% was achieved, with 54% of the students receiving a grade of C or better.

Our students also participated in the Cambridge International Primary Achievement Test (CIPAT) and the Cambridge International (Checkpoint) Examinations for middle school students.

Both exams offer feedback on learners' strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum areas of English, Mathematics and Science.

It is also important to note that Bermuda is the only jurisdiction where an entire public school system uses the Cambridge curriculum and is therefore the only country that requires all of its students to sit such exams.

Seventy-six percent of our Primary 6 students achieved ratings between satisfactory and excellent in English, 66% achieved ratings between satisfactory and excellent in Mathematics and 73% achieved ratings between satisfactory and excellent in Science.

In the Cambridge International (Checkpoint) Examinations, 71% of our students achieved a rating between satisfactory and excellent in English, 77% achieved ratings between satisfactory and excellent in Mathematics and 73% achieved ratings between satisfactory and excellent in Science. It should be noted that, at the middle school level, our students are performing near the worldwide Cambridge International average.

In addition, 16 Sandys Secondary **Middle School** Students took and passed the GCSE Mathematics exam.

Now I would like to share the results of senior school students who sat external examinations.

English - recorded a ninety five percent (95%) pass rate with sixty-two percent (62%) receiving a grade of C or better. One hundred and sixty eight (168) students took exams in English Language and Literature.

Mathematics - recorded a ninety one percent (91%) pass rate with seventy percent (70%) receiving a grade of C or better. One hundred and forty-two (142) students took the Mathematics exam.

Science - recorded a ninety eight percent (98%) pass rate with twenty percent (20%) receiving a grade of C or better. Sixty (60) students took the exams in Combined Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Coordinated Science.

Foreign Language - recorded a one hundred percent (100%) pass rate with eighty-eight percent (88%) receiving a grade of C or better. Forty (40) students took the exams in French and Spanish.

The Arts - recorded a one hundred percent (100%) pass rate with forty three percent (43%) receiving a grade of C or better. Forty-six (46) students took the exams in Art, Art and Design, Drama and Music.

Technology - recorded a fourteen percent (14%) pass rate. Seven, (7) students took the exams in Information & Communication Technology.

Religious Studies - recorded a one hundred percent (100%) pass rate with ninety two percent (92%) receiving a grade of C or better. Twelve (12) students took the exam in Religious Studies.

Physical Education - recorded a one hundred percent (100%) pass rate with sixty-seven percent (67%) receiving a grade of C or better. Six (6) students took the exam in Physical Education.

Business Studies - recorded a one hundred percent (100%) pass rate with fifty-seven percent (57%) receiving a grade of C or better. Twenty three (23) students took the exam in Business Studies.

The next figures are a summary of subjects taken at the Advanced Subsidiary level (AS is the first part of the A Level qualification):

AS English recorded a fifty-eight percent (58%) pass rate with seventeen percent (17%) receiving a grade of C or better. Seventy-two, (72) students took the exam in English.

AS Art recorded a one hundred percent (100%) pass rate with one hundred percent (100%) receiving a grade of C or better. One (1) student took the exam in Art.

The introduction of the Cambridge Curriculum in 2010 for our core subjects was designed to address Recommendation 9 of the 'Hopkins Report': "Align the curriculum both vertically and horizontally." (Graphs indicating student performance in relation to the Cambridge International average are in the background on easels)

I wish to commend teachers, parents, students and Department of Education staff for what has been accomplished in our first benchmark year with the Cambridge Curriculum.

According to Cambridge International Examinations, seventy-five percent of students worldwide achieve ratings between satisfactory and excellent. Therefore, Bermuda's P6 students were at the worldwide average for English. As a cohort, they performed ten percentage points below the worldwide average in Mathematics and two percentage points below the worldwide average in Science compared to their counterparts in 159 other jurisdictions.

We now have a benchmark for three of our core subjects.

At the Ministry of Education, we are involved in a deeper analysis of these results so that we can build on this first experience and set public targets by which we can be held accountable. In telling you what our goals are, and then consistently and publicly reporting the results, it is our hope that feedback will be a key factor in motivating expectations and standards, and in improving students' performance through improved delivery of teaching and learning.

I want to thank our principals, teachers and Department of Education staff for preparing our students for all of the various examinations. And in doing so, I recognize and congratulate our students for their work which has paid off in these graduation and testing achievements.

It is timely that on Wednesday we will celebrate World Teachers Day, our students' results remind me of Benjamin Franklin's quote: "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

We remain committed to teaching and learning.

I now invite the Chairman of the Board of Education to say a few words and then we will take questions.