

Education Brief Part I
Minister of Education
The Hon. Dame Jennifer Smith JP, DBE, DHumL, MP
Friday 25 February 2011

Mr. Speaker, the Two Thousand Eleven/Two Thousand Twelve National Budget shows [pages 18 and 25] that the Ministry of Education has been allocated **one hundred and twenty-eight million, one hundred and fifty-eight thousand dollars**. A reduction of **ten percent** (or Fourteen Million, nine hundred and seventy-six Thousand Dollars) from the Two Thousand Ten/Two Thousand Eleven Budget.

This amount is comprised of **four million, four hundred and ninety-five thousand dollars** for the Ministry of Education, **One Hundred and Five Million, five hundred and forty-four Thousand Dollars** for the Department of Education; and **Eighteen million, one hundred and nineteen thousand dollars** for the Bermuda College. In addition, Three million, Four hundred and eighty-eight Thousand Dollars has been budgeted for capital account expenditure.

The reference [page 11] of a change to a longer-term budgetary model is a welcome one as the school year differs markedly from the fiscal year and the proposed three-year revolving framework will facilitate better education financial planning.

We have simplified and focused the Ministry of Education's mission: "*To raise the quality of teaching and learning so that public schools become the number one educational choice for parents and students.*"

Mr. Speaker, Education is one of those issues about which everyone has an opinion. In fact, each one of us is an expert! We have all participated in, and are the products of, Education. We all know effective teaching when we see it!

We all know that good teachers are enthusiastic, caring and able to get the best out of students. But is this intuitive recognition **really** an effective guideline for those who have to hire and evaluate teachers?

We all know that a good teacher's influence goes far beyond a student's academic performance; so - how do those charged with the responsibility - measure both the tangible and intangible qualities of effective teaching?

A difficult job indeed! They must not only consider student readiness and differences, but also working conditions and resources, group accountability and the fact that student assessments do not take place at every level; and they must also factor in areas where there is shared responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things the Permanent Secretary and I learned during our recent attendance at the World Education Forum was that other countries were seeking to prepare their students for the global knowledge economy by ensuring they gained complex, higher-order cognitive skills; and by focusing their efforts on strengthening the quality and effectiveness of teaching.

Mr. Speaker, since becoming the Minister of Education last November – I have repeatedly come to this House to celebrate and congratulate school achievement – academic and otherwise.

I do this because I believe that we compliment young people when we **ask them for their best** and then **support them to achieve their best**. It is far better to instill in children (and encourage adults) to reach for the stars.

Mr. Speaker, these achievements do not happen by accident, they are the result of **good** principals, **good** teachers and **good** students; so when I report that **The Ministry of Education will have a focus on Teaching and learning**, I trust that those listening would understand that "a **focus** on learning" is **not** the same as saying that '*teaching and learning have not been taking place*'. Indeed, they have!

Our plan for Education reform is simple. Page 15 of the Budget Statement refers to “*Improvements in the performance and effectiveness of our public education system, specific focus on providing a world-class quality education product with teaching and learning at all levels.*”

It is as simple as a return to basics. Simply put – our plan is to focus – single-mindedly - on our reason for existing ... **to teach our children so that they might learn.**

We know that the people are tired of listening to Report after Report - hearing from consultant after consultant. Education has been examined, dissected, analyzed and evaluated. With no shortage of recommendations, suggestions and proposals on how to improve it.

Clearly – **everyone** is concerned about Education and that is why the Ministry of Education has returned to the basics with a focus on **Teaching and Learning.**

Our priority and everything that we do **will** revolve around **students.** Everything that we do will be geared to, and with the sole purpose of, positively impacting our students. As the most important stakeholder in our education system, they will occupy the **primary position** in our thinking, our plans and our programmes as we work to revive public pride in our public school system.

Mr. Speaker, before I go any further – I would like to recognise the work of my predecessors during their various terms of office.

I speak of Ministers:
Milton Scott
The Hon. Paula A. Cox
The Hon. Terry Lister
The Hon. Neletha Butterfield
Randolph Horton
Elvin James and
(for a short period) The Hon. Kim Wilson

Mr. Speaker, I do not for one minute doubt **the good intentions** of the staff of the Department of Education or the Ministry. However, I do not believe that, until this point, there has been the capacity to execute the necessary system transformation.

Mr. Speaker, shortly after entering the Ministry, it became apparent that the person tasked with engineering reform in the public education system was bogged down with the day-to-day tasks of running a complex public education system.

There was absolutely no way for us to move forward with reform when the Commissioner of Education was tied up with the myriad of issues that presented themselves daily. Once we noted that the framework for strategic thinking did not exist, it became an immediate priority to create an interim framework that would serve as a foundation to move forward our reforms. In this regard, we established a guiding coalition that includes the Minister, Permanent Secretary, Commissioner and the Board of Education. This then is the context within which I announced the rearrangement of responsibilities between the Permanent Secretary and the Commissioner of Education.

The removal of day-to-day responsibility from the Commissioner has already had a significant impact on our ability to focus on where we want to be as opposed to sorting out the problems of where we are. The Commissioner of Education role now represents the strategic leadership of the education system. As a result, the Commissioner has already been busy consulting with key stakeholders to aggressively implement a plan that will see the Ministry and Department serve and service education stakeholders in a more supportive way.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time that countries are establishing national standards, they are also transferring more authority for meeting education goals to the school level. Principals are the key to success in our schools and it is the Ministry’s plan to give Principals the autonomy to manage their schools and make key decisions.

We plan to achieve this through the establishment of agreed performance targets. No longer will the Department, or the Ministry, **direct** Principals; instead, they will be free to innovate and encourage teachers and students within a framework of **agreed performance targets**. Autonomy will be tied to accountability and, there will be a support component to ensure success by assisting with any deficiencies. Consultation with principals in this regard, is at an advanced stage.

Mr. Speaker, principals are the gatekeepers who guide and direct teachers and schools. They must ensure that the school environment fosters learning and enrichment, and by introducing the “**Adopt a School**” Programme, Principals now have the freedom to concentrate (or focus) single-mindedly on teaching and learning.

To date, eleven schools have been adopted for a total of **one hundred and forty thousand dollars** that will go towards making our schools safe and secure.

Mr. Speaker, if principals are the gatekeepers, **teachers** are the frontline!

Teachers are the soul of our education system - it is they who must turn our students into scholars excited about learning by delivering knowledge in an engaging, stimulating and motivating manner.

Bermuda should also be concentrating on preparing, attracting and supporting good teachers and good teacher leadership.

Twenty-first century learners need 21st century teachers who not only possess twenty-first century literacies themselves, but who can also create the learning environments that will enable their students to develop such skills. Great teaching is both a science and an art. Great teachers find the genius in both content and student and make the act of learning dynamic and compelling. In order to be effective, teachers must be empowered to make classroom decisions, because the goal is learning – they must adjust curriculum, methods and pacing to meet the needs of the students. Our reformed system will not only empower Principals and schools, it will also empower teachers.

Mr. Speaker, I find myself in the company of President **Barack Obama**, Education Secretary **Arne Duncan** and Filmmaker **Spike Lee** – all of whom recently made passionate pleas for more black men to become teachers. [**One hundred and twenty-eight** of Bermuda’s **six hundred and eight teachers** are men; and one hundred and ten, or eighteen percent, of these teachers are eligible to retire in the next calendar year.] I echo their words for all men and women seeking a rewarding career: “***if you want to make a difference in the life of our nation, if you want to make a difference in the life of a child, become a teacher. Our country needs you.***”

And before anyone reminds me that we have a constricted budget – let me say that even in tough economic times, we must still hire teachers to ensure that the curriculum is covered. These areas generally occur at the senior level where teachers must be experts in particular subject matter like the arts, sciences, and mathematics.

Mr. Speaker, while we are required to hire teachers to ensure student needs are met, we intend to review Department staff who are eligible to retire under the 1970 and 1981 Pension and Superannuation Acts - keeping in mind that **if** staff reductions become necessary, those who qualify for a pension may be given first consideration.

Mr. Speaker, as much as I have made of the important role of Principals and teachers – parental involvement is key! **Parents** ensure that what occurs in the classroom is reinforced at home. As the **first** teachers, parents create the foundation for learning through the values and beliefs they instill before children leave home and enter school.

Mr. Speaker, it is not just parents – but the entire community!

We all have a role to play in Education; and I am going to take some time today to make this Honourable House and the general public aware of many private sector

organisations and entities that support and enhance the our children's educational experience.

I want to publicly thank each and every one of them for the role they play in ensuring that the teaching and learning can take place.

Mr. Speaker, these include: **The ACE Madeleine Joel Fund**

The Altrusa Society

The Spurling Family

Youth Net

Robertson's Drugstore

The Kiwanis Society

K'Kids Club

Bethel AME Church's Sons of Allen Programme

PACT (Parishes Achieving Change Together)

The Lions Club of Bermuda – free Pre-School eye screening

The Continental Society of Bermuda – Pancake Breakfast

St. John's Anglican Church – food hampers for needy families

Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre "Sun Smart" programme

Southampton Seventh Day Adventist Church – daily breakfast for students

Devonshire Recreation Club

E&B Trading Company

Feed the Children Ministries – daily breakfasts and lunches

The Coalition for the Protection of Children – daily breakfast

Pembroke Rotary

The Menuhin Foundation

The Early Bird Programme – an early morning service for parents who go to work early

The Flying Chef – free lunches to 'at risk' children

Southampton Parish Council

Friends of Dalton E. Tucker Alumni Association

ACE Foundation

West/East End/Central Hamper Campaign

Prison Officers Club

Emmanuel Methodist Church

White Hill Gospel Church

St. Anne's Church

Mt. Zion AME Church

Vernon Temple AME Church

Agape Faith Ministries

Friends of Hope – assisting special needs students to attend overseas camps

The Committee of 25

Bermuda High School for Girls

Hamilton Lions Club

Bermuda Youth Counselling Services

Bermuda National Gallery

Caron Bermuda

St. David's Cricket Club

Glory Temple

Miracle Temple

Real Deal

Pizza House

St. Luke's AME Church

St. George's Rotary

Whites & Sons

Bermuda Gas & Utility

Island Construction Company Limited

Village Pride Community Center (VPCC) – free tutorial services

Eliza Doolittle Society - free snacks and dinners

St. George's Salvation Army Home League

Richard Allen AME Church
St. George's Cricket Club
First Church of God
Heritage Worship Centre
Aberfeldy Nurseries
Viking Foods
Bermuda Broadcasting Company
Butterfield Bank
Bank of Bermuda Foundation
Price Waterhouse Coopers
Shell
Cable & Wireless
Institute of Chartered Accountants
BelCo
Bermuda Employers Council
Bermuda Education Network
Bermuda Festival of Performing Arts
Bermuda Hospitality Institute
Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences
Bermuda National Trust
Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
KPMG
Appleby
Zurich
Gateway
Ignition
Partner Re
Makeda Trust
PRIDE
Raleigh International
The Royal Gazette - Newspapers in Education' programme.
Catlin Insurance
Centre Against Abuse
Construction Association of Bermuda
Cornerstone Church
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority
Word of Life
Young Life
Bermuda Police Service
Bermuda Aquarium Museum and Zoo
Department of Youth & Sports – After School Programmes
Various other Government Departments
Individuals, Godparents, Grandparents, parents and
Parent Teacher Associations

In addition to these, Mr. Speaker, there are the wonderful companies who have come to the fore to see that our schools are safe and healthy environments. I speak of the 'Adopt A School' Programme and those who have stepped forward to help in this manner.

The generosity of the Construction firms and local businesses, who have stepped forward, helps us to achieve efficiencies while providing our students with career role models as they watch those who do the work. A total of 12 schools have been adopted thanks to:

Island Construction Company Limited
Oxford Communications
Rock Media Limited
Bermuda Health Care
The Brown-Darrell Clinic
Burt Construction Limited
The Green Family

**Overnight Construction
Greymane Contracting Limited
TeleBermuda International Limited
Hunt's Group of Companies
G&D Body Shop
ACL Construction Limited
Security Associates and
Bermuda Security Group**

I look forward to the day when every school can boast of being '*adopted*'.

Mr. Speaker, we in Education have a very aggressive timeline – at the very least, you will see changes with the start of the new school year.

Before you ask.....how can we execute reform with a reduced Budget?

Let me assure you that the Ministry can **only** withstand the reduction in funding and still proceed with our goals by achieving efficiencies **within** the Department of Education (DOE) and **redirecting** the resultant savings to schools.

Bermuda spends more per capita on Education than many of the best performing countries in the world, **without achieving anything close to comparable results!** [*Approximately Seventeen Thousand, one hundred and twenty dollars per public school student this fiscal year – down two point six percent from last year.*] There are too many examples of students in low income communities making dramatic academic gains for us to believe that success is not possible **in-spite** of the economic realities.

Clearly, we **can** do much more with our education dollars.

One cost saving measure that we have already agreed will have the added benefit of unifying the Ministry and the Department – that is the re-location of the Department of Education and Ministry Headquarters to Southside.

Bermuda is just twenty-two miles long. Nowhere is too far to travel in this tiny Island.

Mr. Speaker, we will transform the Department of Education so that its focus supports teaching and learning. Currently, our headquarters and Student Services are located on Dundonald Street Finance and Human Resources are on King Street; and the remainder of the Department of Education staff is at the former Bishop Spencer School on Glebe Road in Pembroke.

Mr. Speaker, although the bulk of Department staff will move to Southside, we plan to relocate Student Services to the schools they serve. The Department of Education's Student Services provides primary screening, learning support, instructional support, educational psychology, and counseling. Work is currently underway to determine the amount of physical space within each school so that students can benefit from site-based services. Certainly, consultation will take place before the plan is implemented.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education's role is to serve and service the key stakeholders - students, principals, teachers and parents. In our 21st Century model, the Department of Education will become "the wind beneath the wings" of principals and teachers. It will become a helping hand to principals and teachers as they work to deliver the best education to our students.

Our Ministry and Department were well known as a top-down, directing, organization. Instead of that hierarchical structure, we intend to **flatten** the Department of Education so that all possible services and support are placed at the school site. The most significant and immediate change that will impact on teaching and learning is ensuring that Principals have easier access to the Department, the Commissioner of Education and the Permanent Secretary.

As we work through the transformation of the Ministry and the Department, we intend to fill vacant posts only if they can be justified with a rationale that fits our new philosophy and mission.

Mr. Speaker, the Permanent Secretary, the Commissioner and I have spent a lot of time analyzing the Education Budget in order to determine how best to deliver the needed changes with constrained funding. The first thing we have done is to ensure that we can take advantage of 'economies of scale' by making sure that there is **one** line of accountability for **office supplies, travel, consultants** (both foreign and local), **contracts, grants, professional development and training**.

All of these line items now come under the authority of the Permanent Secretary, as represented by the Commissioner of Education.

Budgeted programmes continue to function as usual, with the expectation that proper contracts are executed and each purchase is justified to the Permanent Secretary, **before the purchase can be approved**.

Mr. Speaker, the question that immediately comes to mind is – what was the practice that prevailed previously?

It is no secret that controls were loose in some cases and non-existent in others. Recent Auditor's Reports across Government have stated this fact; and our own analysis uncovered inefficiencies, waste, and in some cases, abuse.

As a result, we have strengthened controls and all requests for expenditure must now go through the Permanent Secretary, who must receive justification for each and every expense and in this manner, model the fiscal responsibility we expect throughout the Ministry.

For the avoidance of doubt, this change applies only to the Ministry and Department of Education. Schools will continue to operate as they have. Our plan is **not** to create greater bureaucracy for Principals while they are trying to meet the needs of teachers and students. On the contrary, our plan is to give them **more** responsibility and **more** accountability.

Mr. Speaker, in a further bid to tighten fiscal control, the Ministry intends to remove the culture of familiarity that naturally exists when persons are in a particular role for a period of time by transferring relevant personnel in order to bring about fresh perspectives. This will assist with strategic planning, tighten controls and generate a value-for-money approach at the forefront of our decision-making.

Mr. Speaker, an area of significant cost to the Ministry is the use of paraprofessionals. The title '*paraprofessional*' refers to a vast range of people and skills; who, in the main, give support to children in the classroom. We are reviewing the role, definition and placement of paraprofessionals to ensure appropriate utilisation. [There are currently one hundred and thirty-two registered paraprofessionals.] We will continue to ensure that students who need support get it.

Mr. Speaker, the **public education system** must meet the needs of all of its students. This includes those with physical disabilities, or psychological and/or neurological disorders that impact their ability to learn. These students require specialised support that may include instructional support, medical devices, or overseas placement.

The only way to determine the appropriate services and supports for such students is on a case-by-case basis, to that end, the Ministry will consult with stakeholders to establish the best solution for individual students and develop and implement a visionary twenty-first century Special Needs Education Policy.

Mr. Speaker, the role, definition and placement of Substitute Teachers will also be reviewed to ensure that they are appropriately utilised. In keeping with the practice in other professions, we will work with the Bermuda Educators Council to ensure that

substitute teachers meet the same requirements as fulltime teachers in keeping with our focus on teaching and learning.

Mr. Speaker, The Education Centre (commonly known as TEC) will also be re-evaluated with a view to offering students the same services in a more constructive manner. Currently, we have **ten** teachers plus other staff, serving a total of **seven** students. Not the most economical use of people. It is our intention, at the end of this school year, to close this facility and relocate the staff on site in our schools.

Let me talk for a moment about this change in policy – John Woolridge is a Behavioural Therapist within the Department of Education. One day, I saw him in the company of a neatly-dressed, well-mannered young man who proudly told me that he is on the Dean's list at his school – I was so impressed that I asked if they were related – only to learn that the young man was, in fact, the beneficiary of Mr. Woolridge's guidance, mentoring, and behavioural techniques. I inquired further and learned of the distance this young man had travelled to reach his current position and I knew that this is what we want for **all** of our students – for them to return to the classrooms, to their schools, with a different mindset, a different attitude and equipped to take advantage of all that we offer.

Each student is unique and they each require a different solution – if we cut our cloth to fit the pattern they need – we will be successful in turning them around – just as John Woolridge was successful. In one year, he did what no school before him could do.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall with all of the focus on healthy living, a recent series of articles about the obesity of students and the possible correlation with a reduction in the amount of physical education and extracurricular sporting activities in our schools. I think we can all agree that a healthy well rounded student has the best chance of being successful in the classroom. So I wish to announce a consultative initiative, involving our Physical Education teachers and community sports representatives, to determine how we can best enhance the physical activities available in schools.

Mr. Speaker, since the Hopkins Report, the comments made with respect to the Senior Schools have been made irrelevant. Their assessments, as well as their achievements, have rendered this so. Both the Berkeley Institute and CedarBridge Academy can boast of high academic achievers, talented musicians, choirs, bands; gifted dancers and actors; competitive athletes and sports teams and dedicated staff.

Mr. Speaker, even with the reduction in their budget, the Bermuda College is planning to launch two new credit programmes over the next academic year as its contribution to meet the demands of local employers. The Associate in Nursing programme will be introduced in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Bermuda Hospitals Board; while the Associate in Criminology programme will be introduced in partnership with the Department of Corrections.

Mr. Speaker, the College is also redesigning their College Preparatory Mathematics and English courses. The plan is to deliver the courses in modules, thus allowing students to work at their own pace.

The College have also partnered with the Hospitality Training Institute to offer the Skills, Tasks Results Training (START) programme for high school students wishing to enter the hospitality industry. The programme will run from March to June 2011.

The purpose of the START programme is to introduce high school students (**ages 16+**) to the hospitality industry while offering skills training for a number of entry-level positions; and providing employers with 'pre-trained' seasonal/temporary local workers. Upon successful completion of the programme, participants are guaranteed full-time summer employment within the hospitality industry on the employer's payroll.

A maximum of 20 students will be accepted into the program which will require a 10 week commitment after school and on weekends. In addition to receiving a Certificate of Completion upon passing the program's final exam, graduates can be certified in one of 12 program specialties covered by the course after 90 days on the job.

Mr. Speaker, shared sacrifice is the common theme in this Ministry; thus, Bermuda College is looking for ways to decrease its expenses to cover the reduction in its budget. There are also proposals that the Bermuda College will be put forward during their collective bargaining negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, you will be aware of the relationship established with the University of the West Indies. That relationship is to commence with the September 2011 school year and we will soon be announcing the criteria for a UWI Scholarship. This scholarship will be funded using **existing** scholarship funds and will be available to students who have completed the Bermuda College programme, or who are pursuing a degree not available at the Bermuda College.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the policy decisions we have taken that are reflected in Education's budgetary allocation. There are things we are still working on – like a revised and expanded Gifted and Talented Programme so that I would not have to tune in to Christie Burgess's show on HOTT 107.5 to learn about the marvelous talent of 10-year-old West Pembroke Primary School student **Angelius Hunt**. His voice is truly angelic and we must ensure that he gets the voice lessons that will see him go to the next level. As Host Christie said "With the right coaching and guidance he has the ability to surpass his greatest expectation!" And this is what we want for all our children

The ultimate goal of the Ministry of Education, as carried out through the Department of Education, is to ensure that we produce healthy, well-rounded students who are literate and prepared to access jobs, higher education and careers that meet the future needs of this country – in addition, by identifying our gifted and talented students we can ensure that Bermuda cherishes and supports those who have been blessed.

I believe that the team we now have in place is well on the road to making that vision a reality.

Mr. Speaker, I will go into more financial detail when we debate the Ministry of Education Heads under the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue.

Thank you.