



Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

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Minister of Education and Workforce Development

Ministerial Statement
Parental Involvement Committee

Friday July 20th, 2018

Mr. Speaker,

There is much to be proud of in public school education. So this morning I rise and take the opportunity to share with my Honourable colleagues about a group of passionate and dynamic parents, who are committed to public school education, and who want it to be considered as a viable option for *all* parents.

Mr. Speaker,

In every public school, there are parents who work with principals, teachers, staff, within PTAs, and in some cases on parent councils to help support achievement for students. At the system level, the Ministry and the Department of Education are beginning to reap benefits for our public education system through the functioning of the Parental Involvement Committee.

Mr. Speaker,

The Parental Involvement Committee or PIC is the first statutory parent advisory body for the Bermuda Public School System. Members of this House may recall that its establishment resulted from the voice of a parent during consultation who asked for parent representation at the system level. As parents are represented and engaged within their children's schools, it made sense for the opportunity to be given to parents at the system level.

Mr. Speaker,

The PIC was appointed following a selection process involving the Commissioner of Education, representatives of the Board of Education, and Bermuda public school parents. The Ministry launched an open application process available to all public school parents. Not only did this allow parents to put their names forward and express why they wanted to be involved at the system level, but it helped the Ministry and Department to engage and connect with parents, and signal to them that their voices are valued and needed at the system level.

Mr. Speaker,

The pool of applicants for the selection process was impressive, and persons appointed represent the diversity of Bermuda and our public school system. Parent members have children ranging from P1 to S4 attending public schools in various parts of the island. The PIC includes PTA and parent council members working in a wide range of occupations, such as a stay at home parent, life coach, executive vice-president, administrative assistant, therapeutic social worker, and teacher, amongst others. The PIC members have been appointed for 2 years, and in future their terms of appointment will be staggered.

The following persons were appointed to the PIC:

Mr. Kenneth Burns Jr.
Mr. Randy Vaucrosson
Mrs. Renee Riley
Ms. Barb Jones
Ms. Cathy Cosham
Ms. Kanika Cameron
Ms. Latoya Pearman
Ms. Lurdes Duarte
Ms. Michelle Jackson
Ms. Nakisha Burgess
Ms. Patrice Amey
Ms. Patrika Dill
Ms. Vernelda Perinchief
Ms. Vakita Basden

For the past year, they have been working quietly and diligently behind the scenes to shape its role, purpose and focus to ensure that the functions that they carry out are in line with the needs of parents, and in support of the Bermuda Public School System.

Mr. Speaker,

The purpose of the PIC is to work with the Commissioner of Education, other school and system leaders and parents to support authentic and meaningful parental and community involvement and engagement. Best practice research for parental involvement states that parental, family and community involvement and engagement are key factors for better student achievement. The PIC believes that the transformation of public school education system will be stronger, more effective and sustainable if parents, community members and staff work together to design, implement and support improvement together. **Mr. Speaker,** I believe this as well.

Mr. Speaker,

The PIC has been holding monthly meetings with the Commissioner of Education. These meetings allow for two-way communication between the Commissioner and the PIC; and afford parents the opportunity and avenue to regularly raise issues of interest and concern. The meetings also provide the Commissioner the opportunity to share important updates and get valuable feedback on areas of priority for the Department and for many parents. To date, the PIC has:

- i. Developed a document that frames its work, outlining its purpose, rationale, vision and the aspirations it holds for our children, parents, educators, schools, the education system and for the PIC itself;
- ii. Developed an understanding of Plan 2022: Bermuda's Strategic Plan for Public Education and received regular updates on its implementation, giving feedback to the Commissioner along the way;
- iii. Advocated for better communication about leadership changes, and made recommendations for improved communication and public relations;
- iv. Shared perspectives on the results of the Cambridge International Examinations, the recent visit by Cambridge and the Department's support for the curriculum;
- v. Given feedback on the 2018/19 academic calendar;
- vi. Advocated for professional development and support for teachers; and

- vii. Advocated for all parents, including those with children with special and other additional needs.

Mr. Speaker,

The PIC has committed to deeper engagement with parents of the public school system during the next school year, by promoting the following activities:

- i. A parent survey;
- ii. Parent newsletters focused on the PIC's work and growing parental and community engagement;
- iii. Hosting parent information engagement and education sessions on areas of interest to parents;
- iv. Bringing parents together for knowledge sharing amongst PTAs and parent councils; and,
- v. Working with the Commissioner of Education to develop - a parental involvement and community engagement strategy as per the Education Act 1996.

Mr. Speaker,

Before closing, I would like to share that the work of the PIC is not without challenges. However, we hope that with additional effort, these can be overcome. Scheduling has been a major challenge. Parents work inside and outside of the home and have demanding schedules. Sometimes the meetings have conflicted with work obligations and at other times with parents' involvement with their children. The PIC has met at various times of the day and even held extra meetings using technology. The PIC will continue to have an established meeting schedule, and structure meetings accessible to all members.

Mr. Speaker,

I absolutely value the work of the PIC, and wish that more fathers had put their names forward for consideration. When recruiting for members in the future, a strategy will be implemented to attract more participation from fathers.

Lastly, **Mr. Speaker,** there is always the issue of resources. The PIC has been ably supported by Ministry and Department staff. However, a dedicated resource is needed to focus on parental and community involvement and engagement. Growing support in this area is a priority and will be under consideration in the near

future. Let me quote one PIC member, who boldly stated: “We want the public school education system to have wings.”

Mr. Speaker,

I absolutely agree; and I am heartened by the current members of the Parental Involvement Committee for their commitment and willingness to serve with passion and dedication; not only for the benefit of their children, but all children within our public school system. Now that I have shared the work of this Committee with this Honourable House, I also take the opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the PIC members for partnering with the Ministry and with the Department of Education to make a difference for children and families.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**