



**Press Conference
The Status of Education**

**The Minister of Education
The Hon. Dame Jennifer Smith DBE, JP, DHumL, MP**

Friday 16 September 2011

Good morning, we are here today to give an update on the state of Education.

Last week, the Permanent Secretary, the Commissioner and I used the first day of school to recharge our batteries. Seeing children who were excited about their first day back at school, entering the class ready to learn about the world, other people and themselves; their minds open to discovering new skills and putting new knowledge to use was invigorating. It helped us to focus on the reason for our work.

I must also publicly express thanks to the Ministry of Government Estates and Information and to our own custodians, Facilities Manager, Stores Manager and their entire teams, for their work over the summer to ensure that schools were repaired, cleaned and ready to open on time! This is never an easy task, considering the age and condition of our buildings, so, special thanks to all for the monumental effort made to get this school year started on time.

Some four years ago, in May 2007, Professor David Hopkins and his colleagues presented their Report of the **Review of Public Education in Bermuda**, commonly known as the “Hopkins Report.”

Two years after this review, the reconstituted Board of Education released its **Blueprint for Reform in Education** – stating as a strategic priority implementation as a five-year plan (2010 – 2015).

Paragraph 130 of the Hopkins Report noted that “*the most appropriate reform model for the Bermuda Education system is one based on “re-professionalisation” rather than restructuring.*”

The Blueprint’s recommendations were to:

- i) Implement an internationally recognised curriculum that is externally assessed – **Done**
- ii) Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom – **In Progress**
- iii) Strengthen and distribute leadership – **Done**
- iv) Facilitate the improvement of standards via accountability and transparency – **In Progress**
- v) Maximise the contribution of parents and community – **In-progress**
- vi) Improve the efficiency of delivery – **Done –**
- vii) Improve the culture and climate of the Department of Education and Schools – **In Progress**

The 'Hopkins Report' made 10 recommendations for Educational Improvement:

Recommendation 1: Dramatically improve the quality of teaching

To this end, I am pleased to announce that **Dr. Avis Glaze**, noted Canadian Educator and advisor to the Premier of Ontario, will be coming to Bermuda to assist school leaders with an improvement strategy which highlights instructional leadership. Dr. Glaze will help to develop school improvement teams which will focus on developing individualised improvement plans for principals and teachers.

Having Dr. Glaze in Bermuda represents a major coup as she is in demand around the world. Best of all, Dr. Glaze comes to Bermuda at no charge to the Ministry of Education. In addition, the Government of Ontario have also agreed that Dr. Glaze's team can accompany her here - also at no charge to the Government of Bermuda!

This kind of international educational cooperation is of great benefit to a country of our small size and greatly appreciated as a contribution to our students' educational welfare.

Thank you Government of Ontario!

Another area that impacted on the quality of teaching and one that had attracted criticism in the past was the Ministry's delivery of Human Resources. I am pleased to announce that recruitment for a Senior Manager of Human Resources is underway. The successful applicant will be expected to develop policies and procedures that ensure we provide the best and most qualified teachers and educational support staff in our classrooms.

Recommendation 2: Move quickly to improve the quality of leadership by principals.

I am pleased to report that Principal Appraisals, which had been in arrears, will be completed by October (in keeping with the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Association of School Principals).

Secondly, this will be an area of focus for Commissioner McDonnell and Dr. Glaze.

Recommendation 3: Radically reform the Ministry of Education.

I should first report that the Permanent Secretary and the Commissioner of Education have reviewed the role and function of the Department of Education to ensure that Department functions are aligned with its role - which is to support schools in their work.

The long anticipated move to Southside means that, for the very **first time**, the entire Ministry and The Department of Education will be housed **together in one building**. Phase one of the move was completed when the Minister, Permanent Secretary, Commissioner of Education and support staff took up office on the weekend of 26 August. Phases two, three and four will follow; with the anticipation that the move will be completed in October.

As previously announced, one of our first acts was to put control of all expenditure under the authority of the Commissioner and the Permanent Secretary. This move has already produced the desired oversight and questioning of expenditure that will help us to achieve the greatest savings possible.

And – the public is well aware that a total of 31 paraprofessional contracts were terminated. Remaining Paraprofessionals have been reassigned to assist students. However, this area is being closely monitored and we are counting on principals to inform the Commissioner of Education of any gaps so that no real needs are left unaddressed.

All vacant Ministry of Education posts have been reviewed to determine whether long-term vacant posts can be abolished.

The abolition of these posts could result in savings of approximately \$1.5M. The review will be completed after consultation with union stakeholders.

All of these moves place us closer to our ultimate aim of flattening the Department of Education to better support schools. However, the work of the Commissioner of Education and Dr. Avis Glaze, will allow us to ensure we base our new structure on the direct needs of schools.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen the strategic management of the education system

The Interim Executive Board of Education became the Board of Education on 1 January 2009 in keeping with the recommendation of the Hopkins report. The reconstituted Board of Education is sponsoring Dr. Glaze's visit. They remain involved and committed to the public education system.

Recommendation 5: Introduce delegation and transparent accountability at all levels

Members of the public will recall an earlier statement about the relocation of Student Services staff to school sites, so that they could play a greater role in the culture and support of schools.

Over the summer, on site office space was identified and ninety percent of Student Services staff are now located within schools. We expect the remainder to be placed before the end of September.

Further to our commitment to provide on-site support for teaching and learning, Curriculum Officers are now also required to spend eighty percent of their time in schools. The Commissioner of Education is leading this focus to support teaching and learning in classrooms and to assist teachers and principals.

In addition, we are developing a more comprehensive policy, consistent with the Education Act and the Education Rules, which outline procedures for first enrollment at the Primary level.

We have also developed a **national School Emergency and Crisis Response Plan**. The plan is awaiting final review by stakeholders before implementation. The Plan outlines a uniform approach for schools to take with regard to emergency management and operations. It is anticipated that it will help schools and protect staff and students during emergency situations. The plan takes an all-hazard approach with action outlines for mitigation/prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

In addition, the **Code of Conduct for Students** is being updated to align with the Education Act, and to include additional infractions designed to address new and emerging forms of bullying.

Recommendation 6: Federate secondary and tertiary education, and, as soon as possible, raise the school leaving age.

The school leaving age was raised to 18. The post of Commissioner of Education was also introduced in the amendment to the Act.

The Commissioner will be working with the two senior schools and the Bermuda College to determine collaborative opportunities for the sharing of vocational resources and staff expertise; and to maximize benefits for all senior students by developing flexible streams with the senior schools and the college for students with a vocational bent and those who graduate with either a BSC, GCSE or both. And those able students who graduate at 17 with the BSC and GCSE will be able to study college level courses while still in high school.

Recommendation 7: Respond to concerns about inclusion and behaviour

The closure of The Educational Centre (TEC) has provided an opportunity to introduce a new structure of Individual Education Plans (IEP's) with the help and support of qualified private sector partners. I am pleased to report that **Dr. Llewellyn Matthews**, Director of Educational Standards and Accountability, supported by **Dr. Judith Bartley**, Acting Assistant Director of Student Services will lead this new focus which has been designed to ensure that all students reach their full potential. It was designed to help them, not sideline them, and where possible return them to the school population.

In addition, we have introduced a new suspension regime in keeping with the provisions of the Education Act. This new regime will see the Ministry oversee **'out of school suspensions'** for offences detailed in the Education Act.

This will eliminate the practice of students being suspended to their homes with no educational supervision. Students under suspension, where necessary, will be assessed and if deemed necessary will receive interventions specific to their concerns to ensure that when they are returned to the school body - they have the best opportunity for successful reintroduction.

The role and function of Attendance Officers will also be reviewed in conjunction with union stakeholders to ensure their role is consistent with the Education Act.

The development of a comprehensive policy for special education in Bermuda is also underway. Subsequent to recommendations from the Ombudsman, and consultation with parents, a consultation paper will be produced.

I am excited to announce that a new autism service delivery model is being piloted this term at the Primary level. This model will provide better support for students with autism. Currently, such students require the assistance of a paraprofessional and in some cases, additional supports. The proposed service delivery model will make use of a special classroom and pool trained teachers and educational therapy staff. Depending on the success of this pilot programme, other programmes may be introduced.

We have also completed a business review of the Child Development Programme. The results will help to ensure we can provide a better foundation for children who will eventually enter the public school system. Our main goal is to ensure that the CDP is fully and appropriately staffed for the job they are mandated to do.

Recommendation 8: Create self-governing Federations around clusters of primary schools and each middle school.

From September to December 2008, public consultation on cluster boards was held. The result was that Bermuda's population was deemed too small to allow for elected Boards as envisioned. Instead, the Board of Education agreed to consult and work with school PTA's.

Recommendation 9: Align the curriculum both vertically and horizontally.

The introduction of the Cambridge Curriculum in 2010 was designed to address this recommendation.

Results have been received for all years (in August) and I intend to share this information with you once it has been shared with schools.

Recommendation 10: Harness the power of parents, business and community in the reform effort.

This has been done by encouraging the adoption of schools and by engaging in cooperative projects (like the Vernon Temple/Heron Bay Homework Project and the Victor Scott/Hope4Life Homework project) in schools.

Further to the work being done that directly correlates to the recommendations of both the **Hopkins Report** and the **Blueprint for Reform in Education**, the Commissioner of Education continues to work on several initiatives to improve teaching and learning in our schools.

Before I close, I would just like to share some statistics from the **Bermuda College's 2011 Graduates Survey**.

- **92** students graduated
- **84** of the graduates completed the survey
- Of those completing the survey, **61** (or 73 percent) were female and **22** (26 percent) were male.
- **One** (or 1 percent) was unknown.
- **50** (or 60 percent) completed their studies as full time students and **34** (or 40 percent) were part-time students.
- **46** (or 55 percent) were traditional age students (under twenty-five years of age)
- **8** (or 10 percent) completed their studies within two years
- **18** (or 21 percent) completed their studies within three years
- **50 percent** plan to continue their education overseas or through Mount Saint Vincent University via The Bermuda College.

At the end of the College's Fall 2011 enrollment period, 1,172 students had registered (just 39 less than last year).

Late registration finished today and therefore, final statistics will not be available until this has been collated.

I would also like to report that as part of the Government's **Initiative for Unemployed Bermudians**, 72 students attended PACE courses (these ended on September 9, 2011) at the College.

In closing, let me say that Bermudians should feel confident that the Bermuda Public School System is in good standing to provide the education needed by our students into the 21st Century.

This year some 371 students are enrolled at the preschool level (a further 421 are on our waiting list). 2,648 are enrolled at the primary level, 1,100 at the middle school level and 1,355 at the senior school level.

We take our responsibility to the entire 5,474 students very seriously; and with the help of The Association of School Principals, The Bermuda Union of Teachers, The Bermuda Public Services Union, The Bermuda Industrial Union, The Bermuda Educators Council and The Board of Education, we will **succeed**.

Thank You.