

Ministerial Statement
The Hon. Derrick Burgess, Minister of Works and Engineering
for
The Hon. Elvin G. James, Minister of Education
Friday, 26th June 2009

**Update on the Implementation of the Cambridge International Curriculum for
Bermuda Public Schools**

Mr. Speaker:

This morning I rise to provide an update on behalf of the Minister of Education on the implementation of the Cambridge International Curriculum in the Bermuda Public School System.

The background of how the Cambridge International Curriculum was chosen has been shared before, so I will refrain from unnecessary detail. However, I beg some indulgence so that I can provide a brief review of how we arrived at choosing this internationally reknown curriculum for our schools.

Mr. Speaker:

Past reviews of public education have identified weaknesses in the area of curriculum. And, for those who may not be aware, the curriculum houses the sum total of not just what is taught in schools, but also how it is taught and how it is assessed. Unless that alignment is truly in place, we will never have a true picture of the achievement of our students. Together with ensuirng the alignment of these three elements, we must ensure that the bar is raised on the quality of curriculum delivery. That means that the quality of teaching must simultaneously be improved. We should not seek to use old strategies with new content, any more than we should seek to put new wine in old wineskins. In both cases, the end result could be disasterous.

There is another factor in the equation which leads to improved public education. There must be high quality educational leadership, from the top of the organization down. This quality leadership has to be bold, and our school leaders must be cognizant of what good teaching looks like. They have to be knowledgeable about methods of effective support as well as about monitoring and providing meaningful feedback for teachers. Most importantly, when necessary difficult decisions must be made if teachers, principals and administrators are not meeting the required standard.

Our children, Mr. Speaker, deserve only the best.

Mr. Speaker:

We have already started putting in to place the dynamic, knowledgeable and versatile leadership we need for public education. In March 2009, we named members of the re-organized Board of Education, and they in turn wasted no time in holding their first meeting in April 2009.

The next level of leadership comes through the post of Commissioner of Education. Although interviews for the post were held in February 2009, no recommendation on the appointment of the Commissioner could be made until the Board, which was appointed one month after the interviews, had considered the results of the interviews. At the first Board meeting, the Board was made aware of the interview panel's recommendation and, after several discussions, I am happy to say that a substantive appointment to the post will be announced in the very near future.

Mr. Speaker:

More than one dozen international curricula, including the International Baccalaureate, the International Primary Curriculum, the UK National Curriculum, the Singapore International American School, the Virginia Standards of Learning, the Plano Curriculum and the York region School Board Curriculum (Ontario), were considered before the Cambridge International Curriculum, which is in use in more than 157 countries, was chosen for Bermuda. As we know now, the curriculum has at least four phases, Primary (age 5-11), Lower Secondary (age 11-14 - the equivalent of our middle schools), Middle Secondary (age 14 -16 - the equivalent of S1 and S2), and Upper Secondary (age 16-19).

Mr. Speaker:

The Cambridge International Curriculum has many positive features, but one of the most important is that it provides checkpoint tests which provide detailed feedback on the student's strengths and weaknesses before they progress to the next level. This should remove concerns about social promotion – the practice of moving students along the continuum of education, whether or not they have met the requisite goals.

Mr. Speaker:

A sub-committee of the Board of Education- the Curriculum Implementation Committee – which is made up of Teachers, Principals, Curriculum Staff, and Department of Education management, has recommended that the full delivery of the curriculum begin at all levels in September 2010. In other words, they have recommended that teaching of the full Cambridge curriculum not take place in the classroom until September 2010, although the training of teachers, the review of resource materials, the development of new time tables and other implementation activities have already begun. The Minister of Education has accepted this recommendation.

Mr Speaker:

After the initial euphoria at finding what we considered to be the perfect curriculum for Bermuda's public education system, we realized that there were inherent dangers in rushing right into delivery of the curriculum. Therefore, we agreed to utilise 2009 as a preparation year before full implementation occurs to ensure that we get it right.

To that end, a team of local educators will travel to Cambridge in July 2009. Upon their return, they will provide training to other local educators. They will be working alongside the Ministry's contracted training partner, the Lead and Learning Centre from Colorado, and, in September 2009, they will deliver information on best practice, which will include as much reference to the Cambridge curriculum as possible.

Mr. Speaker:

Even prior to the selection of the Cambridge International Curriculum, the Ministry of Education had requested that four days be set aside in September, 2009 for teacher professional development. Those development days will still be utilised and will have added value as they will be infused with Cambridge curriculum content. I am pleased to note that Lead and Lean will provide this additional level of support under their current contract at no additional cost. They will also cover the cost of sending their staff to the United Kingdom for training.

Mr. Speaker:

The Curriculum Implementation Committee still recommends that we utilise the Cambridge curriculum for English, Math and Science while retaining the local curriculum for the other subjects – especially at the Primary and Middle School levels. The IGCSE curriculum will be introduced to all S1 classes in September 2010. Students in S2 through S4 will finish their educational experiences by attaining the existing Bermuda School Certificate (BSC).

Mr. Speaker:

We are very pleased with the advances made to date with reforming public education. As we move further along the continuum towards success, we will make more frequent reports on our progress to the Members of this Honourable House and to the people of Bermuda.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.