



Ministry of Education

PRESS STATEMENT

Update – Public Education Schools

The Hon Diallo V. Rabain, J.P., M.P.

Thursday, June 4th, 2020

5:45 pm

Good evening,

As just announced by our Hon. Premier, Phase 3 of the Reopening of Bermuda will commence on Thursday, June 11th 2020. Additionally, as previously shared, all schools (both public and private) were also scheduled to reopen during Phase 3. However, with Phase 3 starting so close to the end of the school year, I have decided that public schools will not reopen this academic year for our students.

I have further decided that the school term will end earlier for public school students to allow for additional school staff training, prior to school reopening in September 2020.

Therefore,

The last day of school for all public school students is Friday, June 19th 2020, instead of Monday, June 29th, 2020.

Students will continue with the remote learning programme which commenced on March 23rd, 2020. This programme includes online learning with school staff and/or the provision of learning packets to students. Continuing with the remote learning programme until June 19th will enable our students to maximize learning days during the month of June.

All Pre, Primary, Middle and Senior schools will hold their end of year school activities, and school leaving ceremonies during the month of June as we bring closure to the 2019/2020 school year for students. We all know that this time of year is usually a special time for our students who are transitioning from pre to primary, or to 'big school' we would say to our younger ones; a transitioning from primary to middle school; from middle to senior school; and from senior to college/university or to enter the world of work. During these transitions there are

always celebratory activities to recognize what our children have achieved, and how they progressed during the year.

Despite the limitations that COVID 19 presents to us in that schools will not be having the usual graduation ceremonies, I am very pleased to share that our school leaders are being very creative in organizing graduation activities to recognize our graduating students at the different school levels. Information about the celebration activities will be communicated directly to our parents. All graduation activities will follow safety and health protocols as stipulated by the Department of Health and the Ministry of National Security.

Also,

The last day of the school term for school staff will remain Tuesday, June 30th 2020.

School staff will continue to provide online learning experiences and learning packets for students up to June 19th, the last day of school for students; and from June 22nd to June 30th, Principals and school staff will complete end of year duties. They will also participate in training workshops and carry out essential tasks in preparation for schools reopening in September for the 20/21 academic year.

Senior Schools/Summer School

Both senior schools will also continue the remote learning programmes until students have completed their courses, and course work for the academic year. Once students are dismissed for summer vacation, senior school staff will spend the remainder of the year grading student assignments, participating in ongoing professional development and preparing for schools to reopen in September 2020. Senior Schools will also host orientation sessions for incoming S1 students before the end of June.

The Department of Education is now finalizing plans for summer course offerings for our S1, S2, S3 and S4 students. These plans include confirming the total number of students and courses required to launch an online learning service so that students will be able to make up and earn credits toward their Bermuda School Diploma.

Also, both senior schools will be holding graduation activities in celebration of the achievements of their 2020 Year Graduates. Information about the celebration activities will be communicated directly to parents. All graduation activities will follow safety and health protocols as stipulated by the Department of Health and the Ministry of National Security.

Child Support Programmes

The Department of Education is currently operating an Educational Support Programme at the CedarBridge Academy for children of those parents who returned to work during phase 2. This programme will now be expanded for children of those parents who must return to work during Phase 3. The expanded programme at the CedarBridge Academy will start on Tuesday, June 16th (as June 15th is a public holiday), and end on Friday, June 19th, the last day of school for students. We urge that only those parents returning to work during Phase 3 who are interested and who have absolutely no home support at all for their children to attend the Education Support Programme, to contact their child's school Principal no later than **Tuesday, June 9th**. This will provide in advance the number and year levels of students who will require education support, and will assist Officers who are running the operation of the Education Support Programme to plan effectively.

September 2020 – The New School Year

I want to briefly inform our stakeholders that during the past two months the Department of Education Officers have been engaged in intensive preparation developing safety and health protocols for schools. This has been in collaboration with the Department of Health. These protocols also had the input from school staff and union stakeholders. Once finalized, the Department will share the protocols particularly with our parents so they are aware of what safety and health measures will be implemented during the upcoming school year. The Commissioner of Education will be writing directly to parents regarding this.

Summer Day Camps

With schools closing on Friday, June 19th for our students, the Department of Education has been in discussions with the Department of Youth & Sport about the need to commence their annual summer day camp programme earlier this year. We are thankful to the team at the Department of Youth & Sport for their collaboration, and pleased to say that in support they will start the annual Summer Day Camps earlier on Wednesday, June 24th 2020.

Private Schools

At this point I want to shift to our private schools briefly. As Minister with responsibility for all Education in Bermuda, during the past month I have had a number of meetings with the Leaders of our private schools. However, as we enter into Phase 3 of Bermuda reopening each of the private schools will decide independently how they plan to move forward with their school operations. Nonetheless, the private schools are following the safety and health protocols as

per the Ministry of Health; and, I am pleased to report that just as the Department of Health undertook a check of our public school entry and exit protocols over a week ago, the Officer is currently undertaking walkthroughs of each of the private schools to ensure that the safety and health protocols in their school buildings have been fully implemented and compliant with the Ministry of Health's Safety and Health Protocols. I thank our private school leaders for the meetings and the discussions we have had about the impact of COVID19, sharing their experiences and a number of other school related matters.

In closing, I thank all of our Department of Education and school staff for their continued commitment to our students. I am grateful to our parents/guardians for their support in ensuring our students are engaged in their remote learning activities. I also want to acknowledge our Union stakeholders who through meetings, and subsequent to participating in school walkthroughs, have provided good input and recommendations for enhancing our Safety & Health Strategy for School Reopening. This collaborative approach has proven to be very meaningful and reassuring as we foster ahead for School Transformation.

COVID-19 has presented us with challenges that none of us would have imagined a year ago. Without the collective efforts of all that I have mentioned above as well as others that I have mentioned previously our children would not have fared as well as they have during this time. I would like to thank the Bermuda National Museum who have provided extensive support to our schools.

Also, I want to take this time to recognize PlanetMath and ConnecTech for their invaluable amount of donated hours of service to the BPSS students. They have readily volunteered without prompting, and provided our students with hundreds of hours of free access to mathematics and coding lessons between them. It is partnerships like these and the many others, COVID-19 has allowed to form that will no doubt help carry the reforming our public school system into the future.

As always, we continue to encourage our Educational Family to use the BPSS Family Feedback form to send in your questions, concerns, complaints and kudos about the work taking place in our schools and at the Department of Education.

Thank You.