

Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Education

To The Senate

By

Senator H. Anthony Richardson, JP

Ministerial Statement

Social Studies Curriculum in Public Schools – Bermuda & Global Studies

Wednesday July 8th, 2020

Madam Speaker,

Every so often there is a cry from members of our community for the introduction of Black Studies or African studies in our schools. It comes as no surprise that with the recent protests at home and abroad over ongoing racial injustices, this perennial cry has resurfaced.

In response, **Madam Speaker**, this morning I rise to share with my Honourable colleagues detailed information about the Bermuda and Global Studies strand of the Social Studies Curriculum that is currently taught in our public schools at the Primary, Middle and Senior school levels.

Madam Speaker,

We are all aware that the majority of Bermuda's population is of African descent, and it cannot be denied that the journey and struggle of black Bermudians has defined significant aspects of this Island's history. It is therefore appropriate that I provide my Honourable colleagues and the country with information pertaining to the Social Studies curriculum in our public schools; and, particularly the strand which focuses on Bermuda and Global Studies. Let me emphasize that the work carried out by the Department of Education, inclusive of curriculum, is guided by Plan 2022, the Strategic Plan for public school education. This is the pathway the Department has been on since January 2018, and will continue on, until we achieve an education system that is transformative for all students.

Madam Speaker,

Our technical officers have this year focused their efforts on ensuring that the Social Studies curriculum is grounded in a Bermudian context. Officers have revised and enhanced the Primary 1 curriculum with resources, activities, formative assessments and outside learning (field trips) for all primary years – P1 to P6. As the curriculum changes focus with each year level, teachers at the Primary level can center

Bermuda's black culture and history, or use African cultural references in the classroom.

Madam Speaker,

For children in Primary 1 through 3, the emphasis is on learning about who they are both individually and collectively. At Primary 1, the family unit is central to the learning experience, and Afro-Caribbean and African references can be used to examine the family. At Primary 2, children are exposed to their cultural origins which include, but are not exclusively, African and Caribbean. Young learners are exposed to food, music, cultural expressions and economic activities of our various identities. Bermuda's cultures and traditions, that is, our holidays, celebratory activities, as well as national and cultural symbols, are taught in Primary 3.

Madam Speaker,

Specifically, Black history is connected to Cup Match, the tradition of Emancipation activities, and the Gombey, a Black Bermudian cultural symbol that finds its origins in Africa, and, having passed through the Caribbean now has its own distinctive Bermudian appeal. Bermuda history continues at the upper school level with the teaching of geography, economics and civics taking centre stage. Children learn about the Island's discovery in the context of the Age of Exploration, and our journey through various global historical milestones as well as the global connection to Bermuda's economic activities. Bermuda's Black history is interwoven throughout these historical narratives.

Madam Speaker,

Our technical officers are continuously reviewing the teaching resources and engaging in community partnerships around Bermuda history. This year, Primary 4 students learned of the migratory experience of Black Bermudians and how slavery developed in Bermuda during the 1600s. Primary 5 students deepened their knowledge of Bermuda's 'slave history' as well as the emancipation movement through Bermuda's own Mary Prince, who was pivotal to the Anti-Slavery moment and abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Students learned about Sally Bassett, an icon in the slave revolt narrative; they also learned about the role Friendly Societies played in advocating for, and supporting newly emancipated Blacks. Icons such as Wesley L. Tucker and Roosevelt Brown are also introduced to students at this level.

Madam Speaker,

The Social Studies curriculum also includes Bermuda's history of racial segregation, unfair work conditions, the nature of racial injustices, the struggle for reform and those personalities who led this struggle. Hence, in Primary 6, students learn of personalities and activists such as the Progressive Group, Dr. E. F. Gordon, Dr. Barbara Ball, Dame Lois Brown Evans, Sir John Swan, and their socio-political impact.

They also learn about the Tucker's Town dispute and the socio-political and economic impact of the displacement of the Black Bermudian community. The Social Studies teaching resources explore the racialised climate of Bermuda in the 1960s and 1970s, and the parallel experiences of African-Americans who form part of the African Diaspora.

Madam Speaker,

At the Middle School level, the curriculum shifts from the local studies to global studies. Featuring the Caribbean and ancient African kingdoms, the curriculum during the past school year has seen the addition of Mansa Musu, who predated the Trans-Atlantic slave period, and the introduction of the African Diaspora Heritage Trail. At the Senior School level there is considerable flexibility with what is taught, but Bermuda Studies is mandatory, with Preserving Our Heritage and Introduction to Africa courses offered as electives. The latter course provides a window for our senior students to see African history outside of the Middle Passage experience.

Madam Speaker,

Earlier, I mentioned community partnerships. These partnerships have supported teaching and learning with the development of new resources and materials; helped to enhance the Social Studies curriculum: and supported professional development.

The Bermuda National Trust, for example, produced an interactive history book on Black History and worked with the Department of Education to deliver remote learning to over 350 primary school students on topics such as 'From Shipwreck to Settler' and 'From Slavery to Emancipation'. Our partnership with the Bermuda National Museum resulted in the creation of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade e-book for Middle Level 2 teachers and students, the Development of a Tourism e-book for Primary 6 teachers and students; and final editing of the Prudence Rebels Teacher Resource Guide.

Madam Speaker,

We have several Bermudian Professionals who have been a tremendous support to the Department of Education in providing professional development for teachers who deliver the Social Studies curriculum to our students.

Thus, in closing **Madam Speaker**, I would like to acknowledge the professional services of Ms. Melodye Van Putten who delivered the Ashay Professional Development series for Middle School teachers. Also, the Department's Education Officer Dr Radell Tankard made a presentation on Mansa Musa, while Mr. Glenn Fubler of Imagine Bermuda, delivered a Transformative Leadership Workshop. Additionally, our Middle School teachers further developed and enhanced their Bermudian [Black] history knowledge base with participation in bus tours organized by Titan Express highlighting the history of black female slaves Sally Bassett and Mary Prince.

Madam Speaker,

Both Bermuda and Global studies has been incorporated into the Social Studies curriculum for our public schools. Our children are receiving the history and culture of Black Bermudians and our African ancestry. We will continue to review, revise and enhance the curriculum so that our students have rich, relevant, rigorous and authentic learning experiences grounded in their history and their heritage.

Thank You, **Madam Speaker.**