



**Ministerial Statement
To The Senate**

By

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Jnr Minister of Education

Middle School and School Reform Update

Wednesday, July 29th 2020

Madam President,

This morning I rise to provide my fellow Senators with an update on the Government's pledge to reform our current education system that includes the phasing out of Middle Schools. The Government's 2017 winning election platform states as a long term objective for education is to *"..Reform public education by phasing out middle schools and introducing signature schools at the secondary level, which focus on the learning styles and interests of our children, including academic, technical and the trades, business, sports, arts, and special needs education..."*

Within the same Election Platform, the PLP Government also pledged to *"..Review and implement the recommendations from the ongoing Department of Education's Strategic Review.."*. This Strategic Review was officially released to the public in 2018 and is referred to as Plan 2022.

Madam President

In March of this year, the Minister Education informed the public, of a long-term adaptive strategy in Plan 2022 will be the guide for the planning for Phasing out of Middle Schools and the realignment of the current system, namely:

Strategy 5.3.5. states, *"To ensure college and career readiness, [we will] review the current structure of schools (primary, middle, senior) and revise for maximum student success, including the consideration of special school designs to meet unique student needs or interests. (Strategy 5.3.5)*

Madam President

The Ministry of Education is currently overseeing the most substantial change to Bermuda's public education system in 20 years. Such a massive change cannot be done in haste, nor can it be done without constant collaboration with the stakeholders. As Plan 2022 was developed with extensive community input, the plan to reform our Public School System will undergo similar scrutiny before any changes are made. To quote our Honourable Premier when asked about Education Reform in the House of Assembly *"..We will measure not once, not twice but three times before we cut.."*

Madam President

I am happy to update my fellow Senators and the public that, despite COVID-19, the planning to Phase out Middle Schools and return to a 2-tier System of Grade or Primary Schools and Signature or High Schools has continued. Since the Minister's last update in March 2020, a **BLUEPRINT** for the future of the Bermuda Public School System has been developed. This Blueprint has been shared with key stakeholders over the last 2 months, and their valuable feedback has been recorded. It will be used for the next stages of the plan development. During these last 2 months, we have presented this Blueprint to:

- The Cabinet
- The PLP Caucus Group
- The Opposition
- The Board of Education
- The Department of Education Staff
- Primary School Principals and Pre-Schools Administrators
- Middle School and Senior Schools Teaching Staff
- Preschool and Primary School Teaching Staff
- Executive Members of PTAs for Hope Academy, Primary, Middle and Senior Schools
- The Executive Boards of the BUT, BPSU and BIU
- The Executive Members of Boards for all Aided Schools
- The Bermuda Educators Council

Madam President

Presentations are also planned for:

- School Custodians and Administrative Assistants

- A Cross-Section of Students
- Members of the Community

Madam President

The Blueprint developed is the result of 2 years of data collection, many collaborative meetings and studying of best international practice. We have a vision that sees changes to the education structure with the removal of middle schools, changes to the alignment of schools to accommodate new ways of teaching and changes in how teachers teach.

Madam President

This Blueprint will see us look at our current curriculum to evaluate it and determine the best way forward. It is desired to see all schools provide equal access to quality education with enhanced delivery to provide:

- A quality academic foundation
- Visual and Performing Arts
- School Sporting Teams,
- Entrepreneurship embedded throughout as we want to produce not only employees but employers
- Schools that practise restorative practices to improve relationships among students and teachers, reduce disciplinary problems, and build communities

Madam President

The Blueprint calls for our grade or primary schools to expand to 8 years with pre-school located within the same schools. The last 2 years of grade or primary school will see our students exposed to City & Guilds and NCCER certifications, Expanded Dual Enrollment with the Senior Schools and Employability Skills. All designed to expose our students to a broader variety of potential life interests at an earlier age.

Madam President

The Blueprint calls for Signature, or Senior Schools to expand to 5 years, and ensure our students are exposed to Work Releases, Apprenticeships, Internships, Bermuda College Dual Enrollment, NCCER and City and Guilds Certifications, Signature Certifications, Leadership and Employability Skills, ABRMS and other International Certifications

Madam President

The Blueprint also calls for enhanced educator's qualifications as we look to not only transform the structure of the system but our teaching system and methods as well.

Educators entering the system will be expected to possess and undergo the following:

- Qualifications, experiences and competencies that meet international standards
- Certifications
- BEC License
- Pass a locally created version of the Praxis Examination
- International Certification (recertified every 5 years)
- ICT Certification
- Leadership Development
- 21st Century Evaluation System (Current evaluation tool is McRel)
- Professional courses (separate from PD) required every two years
- SCARS, TCI, MTSS and Restorative Circles Trained
- Fit to Work with Children

Recognising the current educators may not possess all of these skill sets; it will be imperative for the Department of Education to provide pathways for teachers to have access to professional development during the transformation process.

Madam President

Our blueprint details the removal of Middle Schools and the revising of our current system. However, this work cannot be done by the Department of Education and our consultant, Innovation Unit alone. The Blueprint calls for the development and recruitment of School Redesign Teams. The persons that will serve on these teams will be predominantly teachers and leaders within the public school system and will engage parents, students, business, cultural and community organisations, other learning institutions, and relevant Government Departments.

Madam President

Additionally, Ministry and Department of Education staff will collaborate with and support School Design Teams to test the feasibility and viability of the new models of teaching and learning, along with the assessment practices for the Signature and Grade Schools; and, develop and implement the workforce and technology strategies that best support and enable the redesigned schools and redesigned system.

Madam President

Plan 2022 Adaptive Strategy 5-1 calls for us to “...*Develop a governance structure that both holds the Department of Education directly accountable to citizens through a board of education and that provides the Department greater autonomy for fiscal, human, and operational decisions...*” Some will read this as a call for an Education Authority as called for by Bermuda First. This idea is still being considered, and discussions with Bermuda First are still ongoing. However, the current Governance structure will be evaluated, and the best structure for our system will be determined and presented in due course.

Madam President

I have repeatedly referred to **THE BLUEPRINT** when referring to the future of the Bermuda Public School System. I have also stated that we recognise the need for collaboration and consultation to ensure we have a system that the Bermuda public have asked for through Plan 2022. In the coming months, we will begin more extensive consultation to gather the public’s feedback. When we have a **BLUEPRINT** as we do, that calls for the reduction or consolidation of schools, repurposing schools and realigning the system, consultation is required. However, rest assured, the phasing out of Middle Schools is absolute and will happen.

Madam President

We will make sweeping positive changes in how we educate our students. We will phase out the middle schools to introduce signature schools which will have curriculums to address all professions including the trades and entrepreneurs needed in Bermuda and beyond, now and the future, and for those students with special needs. We will transform our current system from 3-tier to 2-tier based on best practices and genuine input from the Bermuda community. Our goal is to provide our children with the structure, resources, and support to enable them to participate in, profit from and lead the 21st Century Economy of Bermuda.

Madam President

I ask fellow Senators and Bermuda as a whole to join us as we ***Transform the Bermuda Public School System.***

Thank You, Madam President.