



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Education

To the House of Assembly

By

The Hon. Diallo Rabain, JP, MP
Minister of Education

Ministerial Statement

The Bermuda Public Schools - System Transformation

Friday, March 13th, 2020

Mr. Speaker

Plan 2022, the five-year strategic plan and blue-print for our public school system maps out a specific path for transforming public school education. Our vision is that *“all students are educated to lead personally and professionally, compete locally and contribute globally”*; and our mission *“is to provide all students with equitable access to holistic, varied, and high quality instruction that is culturally relevant and empowers students to reach their full potential.”*

Under the strategic leadership of the Commissioner of Education, Officers in the Department of Education have been working through Plan 2022 and executing on the adaptive and technical strategies detailed under the five strategic priorities of the Plan. The Department produced its first annual report on Plan 2022 activities in April 2019. The Department is planning to have the second annual report for release next month.

Mr. Speaker

Yesterday at my press conference, I pointed out that two long-term adaptive strategies in Plan 2022 will be the focus this year, 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)*

Strategy 1.1.4.1 states, “[We will] establish specialized schools in performing arts, science & technology (STEAM), sports, trades and e-learning, or the projected needs of the community.”

Mr. Speaker

I would like to share with my Honourable Colleagues the way forward for the execution of these two long-term strategies as it relates to:

1. The hiring of a System Transformation Consulting Firm; and,
2. The role of key stakeholders in this transformation process.

Let me start with **the Hiring of a System Transformation Consulting Firm:**

Mr. Speaker

Recognizing the depth, breadth and complexity of our public education system, and its entities, during April and June 2019, the Ministry hosted all-day colloquium meetings with Department of Education technical officers and representatives of the Board of Education, the Public Works Estates section, the Cabinet Office Policy Strategy section, and the Bermuda College, with the objective of developing a proposed vision for school redesign, including options for phasing out middle schools. The colloquium included presentations in areas such as:

- School enrolment historical trends
- The physical state of public schools
- The need to reinvent teaching, learning and administration
- School enrolment projections to 2026
- Harnessing parent and community engagement
- The current and capital cost of maintaining public school buildings; and,
- New builds and the use of existing school buildings for redesign options.

There was consensus on the challenges faced and the opportunities needed to create improved programmes and educational experiences for **ALL** of our students; a new level of quality instruction; delivery of public educational services that provide meaningful value and educational benefits with a budget provided; and, strong leadership for student success.

Mr. Speaker

The Ministry could have answered these questions alone but preferred a more inclusive route – one that included taking input from a this small, but knowledgeable and influential group of stakeholders with a close relationship to our public education system. The input obtained, in addition to further research and consideration, led to a decision to utilize an existing school redesign methodology and process as executed in other jurisdictions, but one which was tailored to Bermuda.

However, in light of the existing priorities and delivery responsibilities of technical officers in the Department of Education, it was determined to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the procurement of consultancy services for the school redesign methodology and the introduction of specialized or signature schools. The RFP emphasized the need to contract a consulting firm with the requisite qualifications and proven experience in school redesign to help develop the design process for the Bermuda Public School System in making the shift from a three-tier to a two-tier system.

Mr. Speaker

While architecture and the design of buildings may come to mind to some, in broad strokes, ***school and system redesign*** refers not only to the structure of the school system, and our schools, but more importantly to what happens within our school buildings which includes:

- High-quality leadership and teaching for our students;
- Curricula and programmes that are diverse and meaningful to all students;
- Positive school climates and cultures;
- Physical environments that optimize learning and support and challenge the potential of students
- Involving and engaging students, families and staff in the development and implementation process for school design and redesign,

Mr Speaker

Yesterday at my press conference, I also shared that the Ministry has contracted with the consulting firm **Innovation Unit** Australia, New Zealand Ltd, an organization that is based in the UK, Australia and New Zealand and which has the requisite qualifications, with a proven track record of more than 15 years' experience co-designing processes and methodologies for Education Systems. The seven-member team that comprises Innovation Unit, are a diverse group of innovation and content experts, researchers and service designers, with decades of educational experience in a range of contexts that include: teaching, school leadership; policy development and implementation; system leadership; resource development, educational research and learning and school design. The Consultancy will commence at the end of March and extend until September 2022 – roughly two and half years. This year, an estimated **\$950,000** has been budgeted for the overseas consultancy.

Mr Speaker

This consulting firm brings the diversity of experience to the table which will help us create a unique **Bermuda -Based** solution for the **Bermuda Public School System** that will be looked at with admiration from an international eye. They have experience working with educators and system leaders in the public and private sectors in Australia, South America, North America, Africa and Europe on innovation strategies that build capacity and encourage the design and implementation of new school models.

Some consultancy examples include work with organizations like: Aga Khan Education Services (AKES), France; the Department of Education, West Australia; Goodstart Early Learning; the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership; the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales, Australia; and the Department for Education, in the UK.

Mr Speaker

The role of the consultants will be to help facilitate and manage the school redesign and design process for the Bermuda Public School System in tandem with the leadership of the Ministry and the Department of Education, the Governance Team and stakeholder groups.

Innovation Unit was very transparent in underscoring the need for the Ministry and Department of Education to be committed to the school redesign process from the start of the project to the finish. They have emphasized that **Bermudians** are the guardians of the vision for the Bermuda Public School System and essentially controls the direction for the System. As such, they expressed the need for established teams of **Bermudians** who will be dedicated to facilitating the engagement of the Bermudian learning ecosystem at all stages of the process, including the development of school and system redesign teams.

Mr Speaker

We will take ownership of transforming our public-school system. It is important to understand that our future system will be designed by **Bermudians** via consultation with our **stakeholder groups** and these Consultants are being hired to guide all stakeholder groups through this change management process.

The vision for public school education includes elements such as:

- an internationally accredited public-school education system undergirded by a culture of restorative practices;
- a school structure and day that is responsive to the needs of students;
- upgraded infrastructures and improved resources;
- international leadership standards for school leaders;

- enhanced teacher pedagogies and additional staff certification;
- improved and expanded support services;
- the phasing out of middle schools; the introduction of redesigned schools and specialized or signature schools; and,
- improved leadership standards for the Department of Education

Mr Speaker

For the past two weeks, I have held individual meetings with 14 stakeholder groups to share with them where we are in the transformation of the public school system as it relates to the execution of the two longer-term strategies in Plan 2022, which I mentioned earlier; and to also share about the hiring of a consulting firm to guide the System through this transformational process.

Mr Speaker

This leads me to now share about **the role of key stakeholders in this transformative journey.**

Many of you will recall the extensive stakeholder engagement that was undertaken during the development of Plan 2022. In addition to numerous individual stakeholder meetings across the island, key teams were formed - the Ambassador Design Team and the Strategic Review Team – to review and design the plan based on the data obtained from community conversations.

We intend to keep the same guiding principles of transparency, inclusivity and engagement to redesign the public-school system. This will directly involve our internal stakeholders – principals, teachers and education professionals in focus group sessions - and more broadly, education advocates and the general community in strategy consultation meetings throughout the process.

Mr Speaker

Meeting with the 14 stakeholder groups prior to today was deemed as a critical part of this first phase and sets the stage for the next phases. It was critical because it is important to demonstrate our commitment to transparency, inclusivity and engagement in order to execute the transformative change our public-school system needs. From our meetings, we were left with the impression that there is an appetite for change, and we all pledged to collectively work together to both pursue and achieve that change for the Public-School System. While there were indeed questions, that at this stage could not be answered, all acknowledged that this was a step in the right direction. There is much work ahead of us for the next three years as we work together.

Mr Speaker

The next steps in our plans will include the completion of the Governance Team. This team will be formed to facilitate the project management process and ensure the continuance of the school redesign project. This team will be led by Ms. Lisa Smith, the Interim Director of Educational Standards & Accountability in the Department of Education. Confirmed team members include Mr. Phillip Butterfield, CEO of Bermuda First, Mr. Jevon Roberts the Deputy Chair of the CedarBridge Board of Governors, and Ms. Laurel Burns, Mentor Teacher in the Public-School System. We are currently looking to have other members join this team from both within and external to government.

Mr Speaker

Also next steps in the transformation plan will include extensive participation and involvement of our principals, teachers and parents who will be key is helping to frame the redesign of the public education system.

During the development phases of Plan 2022 our teachers and principals were authentically engaged in working strategy sessions using the design thinking methodology. This approach provided these two critical stakeholder groups with opportunities to contribute in a very meaningful way during the Plan 2022 project. Many teachers and principals were formally trained to facilitate focused group sessions and we will be looking at how we can use the expertise already developed to facilitate sessions moving forward with this project. It is our deliberate intention to provide similar authentic engagement and working sessions during the system redesign project for both teachers and principals.

Additionally, during the next few weeks a parent survey will be launched on the Ministry's website that speaks to themes of school redesign and transformation models. The survey results will be used to help shape collaborative working sessions with parents to ensure that the expectations of parents on how we deliver education is captured moving forward. These types of parental engagement sessions will be an ongoing process during this transformative journey. We will advertise parent sessions on multiple platforms to capture wide participation.

Mr Speaker

In closing, I would like to emphasize that consultation and engagement will be critical moving forward to make this transformational journey a success. We will put our children and their future first. It only takes one generation to transform an education system..... let that generation be all of us!

Thank You **Mr Speaker**