



Statement

To the House of Assembly

By

The Hon. L. K. Scott

Education Updates

March 21, 2014

Mr. Speaker,

The students in Bermuda are alive and thriving. Over the past few weeks, the Minister of Economic Development and Education have had the opportunity to attend several educational or educational related events, and have seen first hand the positive things that are going on in our public school system.

Mr. Speaker on March 6th, I was asked by the Child Development Programme to launch the Red Flags Guide. The Red Flags Guide was first piloted in 2002, by the Simcoe County Early Intervention Council in Canada. The Bermuda Child Development Programme was granted permission to use the Guide by the York Region Red Flags in 2010, and after some revisions, the Red Flag Guide has been modified to suit Bermuda's needs.

This Guide will be utilized by the Child Development team to promote the early identification of children who are in need of additional resources to meet their developmental milestones. The ultimate goal is to ensure that all children in Bermuda are able to develop to their optimal developmental potential.

Mr. Speaker, early intervention is the best prevention, and that has been evidenced repeatedly by several studies worldwide and the Child Development Programme is an excellent community resource that is committed to partnering with parents. The Journal of the American Medical Association states that participation in a school based intervention programme beginning in preschool was associated with a wide range of positive outcomes. It has been found that established early education programs can have enduring effects on the general well-being of a child into adulthood.

Mr. Speaker, early childhood interventions have demonstrated consistent positive effects on children's health and well-being, and their impacts are unique in two important ways. First, early childhood intervention in the first 5 years of a child's life show evidences links to a broad range of positive outcomes up to three decades later, including better reproductive health and birth outcomes, higher cognitive skills, school achievement and performance, higher school attainment, higher earnings capacity, and lower rates of delinquency and crime.

Mr. Speaker, few if any other interventions have been shown to have such multifarious impacts. The second unique feature is that early childhood intervention has proven to be cost effective in providing public benefits and increased well-being that substantially exceed costs.

Mr. Speaker, the staff of the Child Development Programme must be lauded for their continuous efforts to ensure that we have early intervention programmes in place that aid in the overall growth and development of our young people.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, March 14th, I opened the 49th Annual Middle & High School Art Show at the Bermuda Society of the Arts at City Hall. I was so impressed by the range of talent and art work that was on display.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the arts are an important part of every school curriculum, and that means theatre, music, dance, whatever form of expression it takes. It is vital. **Mr. Speaker**, like music, art cuts across racial, cultural, social, educational, and economic barriers and enhances cultural appreciation and awareness. The arts teach people to work independently and collaboratively. It improves academic achievement -- enhancing test scores, attitudes, social skills, critical and creative thinking. Arts celebrate multiple perspectives - there are many ways to see and interpret the world. The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships. Unlike some other areas of the curriculum, in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail.

Mr. Speaker, if I could take a quote given by Dr Ernest Boyer, of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching:

"The arts are essential parts of the human experience, they are not a frill. We recommend that all students study the arts to discover how human beings communicate not only with words, but through music, dance, and the visual arts. "

Mr. Speaker, there are many social ills that are eroding the moral fabric of our society. Our children are joining gangs and getting involved in activities without any understanding of the consequences, legal implications or their legal rights.

Centre for Justice saw the need for our children to be aware of their rights and following extensive consultation over the past year with various stakeholders who work and interact regularly with children and young persons, the Centre for Justice has produced a handbook called "Know the Law, Know your rights: A youth handbook for rights and responsibilities." On Tuesday night, I had the privilege of serving as a judge at the Clearwater Middle School Quiz Night, together with Honourable Member, MP Walton Brown. This quiz night was organized by Centre for Justice, and the material that formed the basis for the quiz questions, came from this Know the Law handbook.

Mr. Speaker, there were three teams of 3 students per team, and it was clearly evident that these students had spent a great deal time studying and preparing for the quiz. The students proudly displayed their mastery of the details and specific knowledge of the subject matter they were quizzed on. The parental support was excellent and all in all, it was a good evening.

Finally, **Mr. Speaker**, I attended the 2014 Bermuda School Sports Federation Primary School Track and Field Events for the Primary Schools at National Stadium yesterday, and I will be attending again later today for the Middle Schools.

Mr. Speaker, sports, whether team-based or individual, are a great activity for children that provide a variety of benefits other than physical activity. Participation in sports can help build self-esteem and confidence, can motivate children to excel academically and can help build social skills. Through sports, children learn leadership skills, team-building skills and communication skills that will help them in school, personal relationships and their future career.

Mr. Speaker, children who participate in sports get praise and encouragement from coaches and parents, which helps to build self-confidence. They also learn to trust in their own abilities and push themselves.

Mr. Speaker, it has been shown that children who participate in athletics excel in academics as well, because they can apply the same principles of dedication and hard work learned through sports participation to their studies.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, there are many positive things happening in our public schools. In particular, **Mr. Speaker,** the arts, and physical education are an important part of any education curriculum and provide our students with a truly well-rounded education. These subjects have been shown to improve a student's educational experience and can lead to greater academic achievement.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding challenges and budget cuts, our schools continue to do an outstanding job. Teachers, administrators, and other school employees who put in tremendous hours are achieving amazing results. They are working to ensure the success of current and future students.

Mr. Speaker, I, as well as the Minister of Education and Economic Development will continue to visit the schools, attend events such as those I have highlighted here today, and bring back to this Honourable House continued stories and updates of our students who are excelling under our public education system.